PATRIARCHAL TIMES;

OR,

The Land of Canaan:

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A FIGURATE HISTORY,

IN SEVEN BOOKS.

COMPRISING

INTERESTING EVENTS, INCIDENTS, & CHARACTERS,

FOUNDED ON

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BY

MISS O'KEEFFE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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I beg leave to observe to the Reader, that the subject of this Work begins at the Eighth Verse of the Twenty-first Chapter of GENESIS, *and ends at the Twenty-ninth Verse of the Forty-sixth Chapter.*

ADÉLAÏDE O'KEEFFE.

Greenford, Middlesex.
April, 1811.

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PATRIARCHAL TIMES.

BOOK I.

ABRAHAM.

ARGUMENT.

Ishmael at the desire of Abraham goes to invite Elim and Jahulan, great men in the land of Philistia, to the feast given in honor of the weaning of Isaac—On his way he meets a distressed Hevite family, whom he relieves, and appoints to see again at his father's tents—Description of the festival—Melchizedek's counsel to the assembly—Dispute between Ishmael and one of the servants—Overheard by Sarah—Her anger excited against the youth—Abraham and Hagar endeavour in vain to sooth her—She insists on their dismission—Abraham's dream—Morning—Hagar and Ishmael sent away—Disappointment of the Hevite's family on finding Ishmael an outcast—The miseries of Ishmael and his mother in the wilderness—Comforted by an angel—Meet the Hevites again, and thankfully accept their offers of future protection.

DART, O rising sun, thy glorious beams, and gild the tops of the mountains! Spring from thy nest, high-flying eagle, and with the mighty rushing of thy

wings, awake the birds of the air! hover over the waters, pelican of the wilderness, fill thy pouch with fish to feed thy little ones, and let it be a feast. Messengers, in race outstrip the ostrich, rival the winds, and bid the multitude flock to the tents of Abraham!

My father, said Ishmael to the Patriarch, has Eliezer the steward, invited all our neighbours to the feast? No, my child, replied the holy man; Elim is not bidden, neither is Jahulan: but you, Ishmael, shall bear to them my wishes. Know you where they dwell? Yes, my father: Elim, the aged kinsman to Abimelech, dwells in the city of Gerar; and Jahulan abides on the south banks of the brook Besor, where our flocks now feed.— Take then, my son, a she-ass, and lade it with provisions, with balmis, with scented waters, and with sweet-smelling flowers: for we appear not before our friends without laying at their feet such like tokens of respect and love. When you arrive at their dwellings, bow down

before them as becomes your youth, but unto Elim bow even to the ground, for although Jahulan is the mightiest, Elim is the most aged; and say unto them, a festival is held this day at the tents of Abraham, for on this day is Isaac weaned, and my father wishes it honored by the presence of all his friends. He said, and Ishmael went forth to obey the commands of the Patriarch.

Start from the rind, and slowly wander down the bark, sweet drops of fragrant gums! Rear your heads, ye balmy shrubs, a hand comes to gather your beauteous honors! Shower down spices, O ye winds! and thou, O rose of Dabir, glow with deeper blushes, for soon thou wilt adorn the bed of Isaac.—Swell with perfect ripeness, ye clusters of the vine; take browner tints, fruit of the banana; and stoop thy boughs, fair blossoming almond, submit thy branches to the gathering hand of the damsel. Ye smiling fields, ye cultured gardens, summits of the hills, and fertile vallies, yield

your produce in profusion, to grace the feast which will be held this day at Beersheba, to honor the weaning of the babe of Abraham and of Sarah.

What desart place is this? Verdure grows not here, neither is the fresh spring met with; the barren heads of rocks rise above the sandy surface of the waste, forming between them pits, dark and profound. Woe to the traveller on whom night falls, whilst journeying on the highway which lies across this wilderness! The distant cries of the owl and of the bittern strike sadness to the heart; but the bewailing voice which floats now upon the air, is neither that of the bittern nor the owl. Behold at the foot of a huge rock, a man sits clothed in the skins of wild beasts; his eyes are hollow, and his pale cheek speaks sickness, poverty, and sorrow. Near him stands a woman holding a starving child by the hand,

and on her garments hang four children, wretched as the first.

Reumah, said the man, I beseeched thee not to go alone, and yet thou wouldst not hearken to my voice. Thou saidst I was fierce, yea, savage; and that instead of begging food, I demanded it: yet if I had accompanied thy steps, this evil might not have befallen thee. Didst see Jahulan, the mighty Philistine, himself? saidst thou we came from a distant land? didst ask, kneel, weep? O Nehazi, all this I did! Reumah soft replied. I said unto him, a leopard sprang from a covert upon this our elder-born; my husband saved the child, but the wild beast tore his arm, and he can no longer use the bow, which until now supplied us with food. I implored him to give me bread, nay, a little water to wet the lips of these babes, but he bade me seek it in the brook; and when I told him the springs of the land were dry, he called me wandering Hevite, wretched outcast, base idolater, for that I worshipped not his

God: his servants then advanced, and with revilings, stoned us from his door.

Nehazi lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven: then, The hour of death is come! but although we thus are hemmed in by sickness, by hunger, and by bitter anguish, I feel a glowing joy within me. By hunting, (and he looked upon his bow which lay beside him,) by hunting I have lived from youth to manhood, and never did I wrong a neighbour to the value of a grain of wheat. The strength of my arm hath nourished my wife and little ones, and even by the loss of it I saved my child, my beloved Eziel. Reumah, what so pure as the hearts of our children? their lips are free from guile, and never were their hands defiled by a theft.

He ceased, on beholding his eldest child sink upon the ground, pale and trembling: My father—pardon, O my father! I beheld, (and he put his hand into his bosom,) I beheld thee and my mother, my brethren and my sister, dying

for food, and when we went unto the dwelling of Jahulan, I unseen, entered the door; this small bag of dried dates—I have not yet tasted them, lay upon a table——O father, father! do not look so dreadful; thine eyes kill me.—Save me, O my mother! save me from his looks. The child dropped the bag, and screaming, rushed into his mother's arms.

Let go thy hold! cried Nehazi, rising and approaching Reumah—let go thy hold!——Thou my son! thou art no son of mine—child of the serpent! who taught thee to steal? Was it I? was it thy mother? Is it not better to perish than to steal?—Woman, let go thy hold, that in sight of his brethren and his sister, I may chastise him, and crush his growing wickedness! He extended his left arm to seize the child, when Reumah shrieked in wild affright, Stay thy hand, O man!—what wilt thou do? thou wilt not kill thy son, O man!

In a voice soft as that of the turtle, when whispering his mate, he invites her

to come forth and taste the morning air, Nehazi folding his arm round the neck of Reumah, said, looking on the child, who had fainted on her bosom, Beloved wife! partner in my sorrows! kind soother of my affliction! thinkest thou I would harm the lad? Nay, a hair of his head I would not pluck away. But better is it that he be scared by me, his loving father, with words of wrath, than hereafter fall into the power of man—thou knowest what is that power: stripes and bondage might be our darling's lot, were he to steal from the stranger's vineyard a single grape.

He paused, and looking around, beheld the hungry eyes of the children fixed on the bag of dates. He took it up—then, A spirit of darkness led Eziel's hand to take this food; it is evil. Shall I give gall to my little ones? shall I feed them with wormwood? nourish them with the produce of a crime? Even in this moment of affliction, we are seen by the God of Hevi, and were it his will, these stones

he could transform to bread, and out of the sandy desert, bring forth living waters.—Die, beloved wife! and ye, my tender babes, perish all, ere Nehazi feeds ye with the wages of sin! He said, and threw the bag of dates into an adjacent pit; at sight of which act of seeming cruelty, the children burst into loud cries of despair and grief.

O how my father Abraham would love this man! said a youthful voice, and forth from behind the rock stepped Ishmael.—Thou man of grief; how great are thy afflictions, but how blessed is thy heart! Speak not, for I have heard all; and now behold this she-ass, it is laden with provisions. Arise, help me to unload the beast, that ye may eat and not die.

He spake, but his voice was not obeyed, for gladness smote upon the heart of Nehazi with such overpowering suddenness, that it was expressed in frightful laughter, and in an agony of joy, he fell prostrate on his face.—Angel

of heaven! said Reumah, putting Eziel gently from her arms, and casting herself at the feet of Ishmael: Angel of heaven! delay not, but give me food, that I may minister to my famished husband, and these weeping young ones.

Ishmael having unladed the beast, his hands moved with eager quickness, opening the several packages which composed its burden. The ravens of the valley dart not swifter on the far-off scented carcase of a perished heifer, than did Nehazi's children on the grapes, the figs, the pomegranates, raisins, bread, wine, and the roasted quarters of a kid which were now spread on the ground before them.

Mother of these babes! said Ishmael, leave thy husband to my care; go, take sustenance thyself, and suffer not thy little ones to come to harm by overfeeding. With early wisdom thus endowed, young Ishmael spake, then ministered to Nehazi. He examined his disabled arm, and having washed the

wounds with scented water, he applied balsam to them: then took off his own turban, and with the fine linen of which it was composed, he bound up the suffering limb. This charitable office compleated, he poured down the throat of the enfeebled man, a cordial rich with spice and distilled balms.—A sigh escaped the bosom of Nehazi, and a mighty weight seemed taken from his heart.

Nay, my friend, exclaimed the youth, let thy exhausted strength have time to recover itself; attempt not to speak, but hear me. The lands of Abraham lie northward of this desert, and he is rich in camels, in herds, and in flocks. I am his son, his heir, his first-born, his well beloved Ishmael, and behold he sent me with these presents to invite Elim and Jahulan to the feast held this day in our tabernacles. To Elim I have been, and have delivered half the lading of this beast, and unto Jahulan I was going, when attracted to this spot by the plaintive voices of thy children; but thither now I will not go. Thy wife and

harmless babes were driven from his doors, wherefore these gifts he shall not have, neither shall he eat bread in the house of Abraham at my bidding. Nehazi—did not thy wife call thee Nehazi?—look up, hearken to my words, and meet my wishes. Return with me now to my father, and I will speak to him concerning thee. Shouldst thou still prefer the roving life of an archer, which it seems thou hast followed from thy youth, then thou shalt be fed and sheltered until thy wounds are healed; but if inclined to dwell in tents, my father, at my voice, will take thee for his hireling, and thou shalt have charge of the herds which feed in the meadows east of Gerar. Say, Nehazi, shall it be thus? wilt thou come with me?

Nehazi kissed the feet of the lad, saying, My heart is full. Let not my young lord feel anger against his servant, but I cannot go, for grief, disease, and famine are unwelcome guests in the house of feasting. Thou hast snatched

us from death, and been to us a saving angel, but still doth the hand of sickness bear heavy on me—the strength of my wife, what is it? and even this sudden change from misery to happiness, hath spread a trembling faintness through our limbs. Suffer us to abide here until the festival thou speakest of be past: we will nourish our bodies with food, and refresh our minds with sleep; then on the fourth morning, at the eleventh hour, we will repair to thy father's dwelling, and bend before him in the dust.

Be it so, replied Ishmael; then in four days I shall look to see ye at Beer-sheba. And now behold this beast, it is thine; when thy provisions are spent, place thy wife upon its back, and when the feet of thy little ones are weary, this she-ass will carry them. And now I must depart, or the guests will be arrived ere I return. Nehazi, fare thee well—woman be comforted; the soft words of my loving father Abraham will give gladness to your hearts, and the smiles of Sarah and of my

mother Hagar will make ye forget your sorrows. Peace be with ye, and the blessing of God be on ye all.

Ishmael walked on, but often turned back, and still beheld their eager looks extended after him. He is gone! sighed Eziel, he is gone! He never hungers— Would I were Ishmael! The gladdened eyes of Nehazi met those of Reumah, and they rushed into the arms of each other, whilst the now delighted children hung upon their garments. The parents wept, and their tears sparkled on the curling locks of the little ones, like dew drops on the fleece of the lamb.

Blow, ye freshened gales! and carry over yon hills the sound of the loud singing voices, and of the harp, and of the timbrel, so shall the Patriarch hear and say, My neighbours, come! Veil, ye fleeting clouds, O veil the burning rays of the sun, lest the people faint by the way: for behold they journey from

Ephrath, from Mamre, from Salem, from Dabir, from Gozen; yea, from all parts within three days journey, they flock to the plains of Kadesh and of Shur.

The guests, leaving their camels, mules, and asses, to the care of their men-servants, drew near the dwelling, and were there met and welcomed by Abraham and his wife. And now all disperse; some repair to the numerous tents which cover the plain, others recline beneath the shade of the trees, and the chief and most distinguished guests accompany Sarah and the Patriarch, and place themselves under the boughs of a spreading cedar. The branches are hung with garlands of flowers, and the air is filled with the delicious odours of myrrh and spikenard, and clouds of incense from burning cinnamon. Melchizedek, the royal priest of Salem, having asked a blessing on the provisions, the feast began.

O Sarah! how dost thou appear a queen above thy female friends and above thy handmaids! yet, nor the rising, nor

the meridian sun art thou, but the setting sun sinking to rest in venerable majesty. O were Egyptian Pharoah to see thee, thus gloriously attired in embroidered purple, thy head shaded by a transparent veil, thy arms and neck adorned with golden bracelets, and jewels of silver and of gold, again would he forget the winter of thy brow, and gaze upon the smiles which play around thy lips. As the bud flourishes on the stalk of the full blown lily, so lay beside its mother the beauteous infant upon a pillow made of the down plucked from the breast of the swan. Behind her mistress stood Hagar the Egyptian, dressed in the fashion of her country. Her turban, her sandals, and her graceful raiment outshone the light azure of a summer sky. Youth and health tinged with ardent red her tawny cheek, and sparkled through the blackness of her eyes. And where is her son, her youthful Ishmael? the brilliant meteor shoots athwart the stars of heaven, so Ishmael, clad in his festive tunic of

crimson edged with gold, darts from tent to tent, from tree to tree, keeping the servants to their duty, and waiting on the guests with winning smiles.

Whilst the hearts of all were gladdened by the smoaking meats, and the produce of the vineyard, their attention was fixed by the words which flowed at times from the lips of Melchizedek. Thus said the holy king—

Lords of the soil, in time of harvest the sound of the sickle yields delight, but far more delightful the voice of the hireling singing at his labour.—Wives, how lovely the bird of Paradise! but lovelier far the face of the bondwoman when she smiles on her mistress.

Young men, be your eyes sun-beams to spy the faults of the comely damsels, but when they become the wives of your bosom, be dim-sighted as the mole. Virgins, well favoured are ye in the eyes of young men, but when wives, if ye hearken not to the voice of your husbands ye re-

semble the apples which grow on the shores of the Salt Lake, fair and beautiful to the sight, but bitter to the taste.

Little ones, watch the looks of your fathers, and obey the commands of your mothers; so may no evil fall on ye. The hawk hovers over the young brood —they see not their danger, but the hen perceives it: she calls to them, they hear her voice, and hide in the feathers of her bosom—they look from beneath her wings, and lo! the hawk is gone.

Bind not the limbs of thy children, thinking that pastime brings to folly:—Who would confine the grasshopper of the spring, with a promise that it should skip and chirp in winter? Say not to nature, thou art rude, and unseemly, and must not appear in the actions of my child: sweet is the honey of our hives, but sweeter far the wild honey of the wilderness.

When a wanderer says, I hunger, ask not whether he be a Kenite, or an

Egyptian; a Jebusite, or an Amorite; but haste and give him bread, for the Most High gives ere we ask.

Read in the eyes of the kind-hearted camel, when his burden is sufficient, and strain not the sinews of the labouring ox.

When ye judge between man and man, take not the part of the offender, because he hath a hundred kine, and frown on him who is offended, having but one poor lamb—let his poverty be a bribe to thy heart.

To him who says to thee, Lord, hear my prayer, and give me justice this day, say not, Come to-morrow: lest his soul should be called away that night, and thou thus shouldest miss a blessing.

He spake, and the young, the aged, and even the little ones gazed with delight and reverence on his venerable face. And now comes the evening when the guests prepare to return to their abodes.—Melchizedek arose, his white garments flowing beneath his feet added height to his tall stature, and from under

the golden fillet, which encircled his head, fell his silver hair in snow-white ringlets.—Elim the aged prophet stooped, and taking up the infant Isaac, placed it in the arms of Melchizedek, who held it up to the view of the surrounding multitude.—Abimelech, king of Gerar, then advanced, followed by Phicol, the captain of his host, and with the warlike motion of their shining faulchions, they marshalled the people into the form of a bow, whereof the men made the outward part, the women the centre, and the children the inward.

Thou, O God! cried Melchizedek, Possessor of heaven and of earth, Creator of all, Lord of angels and of men, look down upon this babe, and as thou hast blessed his father, so bless him. Abraham shone glorious in battle, and pursued the kings and their armies even to Damascus, scattering them as the whirlwind scatters the sand of the desert, so strengthen thou the arm of this his heir—may the sword when lifted up

against him be as straw, and the club as touchwood.—In smiling days of peace, feed him with the richness of the land, anoint him with his own oil—destroy the canker ere it consume the blossom—let not his trees cast their unripened produce, or the locust devour the fruits of his field.—Bless him, God most high! bless this infant Isaac, and may he inherit the wisdom, the righteousness, and the glory of his father Abraham; may he be honoured among men, and live to behold his children's children.

He ceased; the people lifted up their voices in loud rejoicings, and the mountains echoed with the sounds of gladness. Melchizedek having laid the babe on the bosom of its mother, blessed Abraham, Sarah, and the multitude, and prepared to depart. The Patriarch beseeched him to sleep that night in his tents, but the aged priest replied, that he had promised to sojourn some days in the city of Gerar with King Abimelech. At the appointed signal, the royal camels were led forward

by Ishmael, Eliezer the steward, and attendants. The beasts knelt, and the kings placed themselves thereon; then said Melchizedek, laying his hand on the head of Ishmael—The blessing of the Almighty be also upon thee young son of Abraham: be thou a staff to the old age of thy father, and O mayest thou find favour in the sight of the heir, the infant Isaac, and in that of Sarah his mother. The camels rose with their burden, the royal guests departed, and the multitude followed. The sounds of the singing voices, of the tabret and of the harp as they wind among the hills, die away at length upon the air in sweet sighings.

Our guests, said Abraham, as he attended Sarah into the house, our guests are returned to their homes filled with gladness: their mirth coming from the heart gave me exceeding great joy. But why came not the wealthy lord Jahulan to the feast? didst thou not send young Ishmael to invite him to the weaning of our son? demanded Sarah. I did, replied

the Patriarch, then turning to Hagar, he inquired, if she knew wherefore Ishmael had not obeyed him. No, my lord, I know not, but why he did not go, my son said he would explain to thee when the guests were departed.

Do I not hear the voice of Ishmael? said Sarah—it is loud, and wrathful!—why doth Ishmael raise his voice?—he will awake my babe—nay Abraham stay, and Hagar do thou also tarry here, I will go myself. They obeyed her desire, and she hastened forth.

Thou art full of guile, thou cruel bondman! said Ishmael to Natoch, who sat reclined upon a seat under a plantain which grew near the door of the dwelling; the poor Nehazi, although he be a Hevite, is a righteous man, and my father will protect and feed his wife and little ones: do I not know that my father is humane, and kind? why then dost thou

say he will not take idle wanderers into his service, and that I did wrong in giving them the she-ass?—thou art keeper of the asses, but the beasts are not thine, thou uncharitable Philistine! they belong to my father Abraham, and I am his first-born, his heir. Art thou? said Natoch carelessly, then fixing his eyes upon the rising moon—Thou art his first-born, and the son of Hagar, but not the heir. Henceforth we will be commanded by none but the heir; when Isaac bids, then will we obey. The wrath of Ishmael was kindled into a flame, and he exclaimed, I am the elder born, and obedience is due to the elder. Can a sucking infant give commands? Can a scarcely weaned child lord over ye? Go then to Isaac, scorning bondman! bow to the awful Isaac; as well mayest thou bow to the staggering calf or the callow bird just peeping from its shell—seek within, and thou wilt find him lying on the aged bosom of his mother. O mighty heir! who from the rising of the

sun, hath slept, and cried, and sucked, and cried, and slept. Then Ishmael laughed in scorn, and turned his back upon the bondman, when lo! Sarah stood behind him.

The head of Ishmael sank upon his breast—Natoch rose and went from the presence of his mistress.—Serpent of the woods!—Reptile of the Nile! Sarah exclaimed, anger sparkling in her eyes, and trembling on her lip.—Now, Ishmael, thy scoffing hath been heard.—Have I not been a mother to thee?—when didst thou say to me, Sarah do me that service—give unto me this thing—ask of my father such and such a kindness, and when did I say thee nay? why shouldest thou mock my helpless babe? when thou wert helpless, Ishmael, I carried thee in my then, not *aged* bosom; thou hadst two mothers.—But thy heart is evil—thou wilt shake my infant in its sleep, and pluck it from my breast, and every harm thou wilt do it to make thee malicious

sport.—I will not trust my Isaac in thy sight.

Abraham and Hagar who had followed Sarah at a distance, heard what passed, and now approached. The Patriarch taking the hand of the lad, led him towards Sarah, saying, Cast thyself at the feet of my wife, and say unto her, I have spoken wrongfully against thee. Ishmael obeyed, when Sarah, turning to Hagar, demanded wherefore she had dealt ungratefully and stirred up her son against the heir? to which the bondwoman, bowing with low submission, replied, O look upon me with an eye of kindness, thou, the mistress of my person, and the honored of my heart.—Ere the birth of this lad, when we dwelt in Kirjath-arba, I dealt foolishly by thee, and, to escape deserved punishment, fled from thy face, and wandered to the wilderness of Shur. There the angel of the Lord appeared to me, saying—Hagar, Sarah's maid, whence comest thou, and whither wilt thou go? Return to thy

mistress and submit thyself unto her hand. Now tell me, have I not from that day to this been unto thee a faithful bond-woman? O then if thou still regardest me with grace, turn away thine anger from this my son. Sarah, wilt thou not pardon my child?

The lad, said Abraham, is young, and his words are idle. He is as full of wanton fire as the young colt, when tossing back its mane in scorn, it rushes over the plains, breaking through each fence, and overleaping every bound. And yet, Sarah, full well I know that Ishmael loves our son.—He does, O he does! cried Hagar, eagerly. Ere the guests came, he sat beside the bed of Isaac, and said unto me, mother, how white is the skin of the babe, the feathers under the wings of the young cygnet are not so white, so soft—the rosy blush of the apple blossom not so beauteous as the cheeks of the infant.—Sarah, honored, most beloved mistress, pardon, O pardon the lad at my supplication! Sarah

replied not: sullen anger sat upon her brow, she looked around with the disdain of authority, then returned to the room where she had left the babe. Hagar following the sorrowful Patriarch and her indignant mistress, stooped unseen by them, and kissed her dejected Ishmael, and patted his downy cheek in silence.

When all had re-entered the house—Draw near, Egyptian Hagar, and bring thy son to me, said the Patriarch; give me your hands that I may put them into those of my wife, so shall she be brought again to smile upon ye. Hagar and Ishmael obeyed with alacrity, but Sarah, to avoid compliance, bent over Isaac, and with lingering hand pretended to settle the pillow whereon he slept. At this appearance of determined anger, the humble bond-woman threw herself at Sarah's feet, and embraced her knees; when Abraham, turning to Ishmael, said—Why standest thou thus with folded arms and sullen eyes? I marvel at thee, Ishmael! Dost thou not behold thy

mother prostrate on the earth, abased and sorrowing for thy fault? At these words the lad looked up, and gazed upon his weeping mother, and then upon the sleeping Isaac, and now upon the face of Sarah: nor grief, nor love, nor repentance appeared in his looks.

The babe at length awoke with smiles, and Sarah placed it on her lap: its laughing eyes were cast around, but beholding Ishmael, it stretched up its little hands and struggled to approach him—the heart of the lad melted at this sight, he fell at Sarah's knees, and wept upon the naked feet of his infant brother.

O beauteous babe! he cried, beloved of my heart, pardon me.—If thou couldst speak thou wouldst tell thy mother how much I love thee.—To watch beside thy bed when asleep, or to sport with thee in thy nurse's arms, have I not often forsaken the delightful pastimes of the field, and quitted my favorite companions?—Sweetest Isaac! thou shalt live ever in my bosom. When the Lord blesses thee

with riches, I will whisper counsel in thine ear, such as my father speaks unto me: and shouldst thou by secret or by open enemies be turned from thy tents, dear helpless child! a stone shall not wound thy foot, hunger thou shalt not feel, neither thirst, until I die of both. Let then thy smiles, soft innocent, intreat for me with thy mother, that she will forgive the words of folly I was betrayed into by the insolence of Natoch.

Again he embraced the feet of the babe, who, ever pleased with the presence of the youth, now yielded in full delight to its playful humour. Whilst it raised its little voice in laughter, leaping and panting in its mother's arms, its dimpled hands wandered over Ishmael's features, and roved among the curls of his hair; then laying its infant face, which glowed with rosy beauty, on that of the lad, it oft applied to his its balmy lips, as yet unknowing how to kiss.

The smiles of Abraham and of Hagar

seemed to say, now will our Ishmael be forgiven; but Sarah abruptly disengaging Isaac from the youth's embrace, replied —Wet not his feet with thy tears, they will chill his blood—verily, Ishmael, thy dark eyes terrify my babe; stand back—thine eyes are black and rolling.—What saidst thou but now?—that thou wouldst feed Isaac when he wandered famishing and bare-footed?—when shall that come to pass? shall my son look to thee, to the son of the bond-woman for food, and say —Protect me, clothe me, Ishmael?—thou dost seem to forget that Isaac is born to greatness, to wealth, and dominion —thou seekest to become elder brother to my babe, and thy heart is filled with pride and derision.

Here she was interrupted by Abraham, who beseeched her not to clothe the words of the lad in strange meanings, or accuse him of follies of which he was innocent; to which she replied, He hath deceived thee, but I have marked him well, and long have marked him. He

envies Isaac, the child of promise, by whose birth he is no longer heir; and he says in his heart—my father is aged; when he dies, then will I reign over Isaac.

Abraham perceiving that the presence of Hagar and her son but served to heighten the anger of his wife, desired them to leave the chamber, and retire to their beds. They turned to obey, when Sarah, addressing Ishmael, said, Stay and tell me why came not Jahulan to the feast?—Reply not, for thy voice is as harsh to my ear as the cry of the mistle bird; yet stop, and say wherefore didst thou not bid Jahulan hither? He is the mightiest in the land of the Philistines, save Abimelech the king, and thou wouldst not invite him to the weaning of Isaac lest my babe should be too highly honored.

The words were scarcely pronounced, than she perceived Abraham and Hagar looking at each other; then did her indignation become fearful, and she ex-

claimed—Lo! I am despised! scorned by my husband, and mocked by this bond-woman and her son—my wrongs be on thy head, O Abraham! am I not thy wife? Thy heart is stolen from me—this Egyptian will do me harm, and her son will hurt my child; wrath and danger sit in their eyes, wherefore cast out this bond-woman and her son—cast them out, for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

Grief had long agitated the bosom of the Patriarch, but it now gave way to astonishment and kindling anger; he commanded Ishmael and Hagar to quit the room, and when alone with Sarah, he said unto her, Cast them out!—Whither is thy reason fled, O woman? Thou canst not think I will bring this evil on me. The mother hath submitted to thy hand—Ishmael hath humbled himself before thee and the heir. Even the Almighty only requires repentance for faults committed; what more should

we?—Cast forth my son and his mother!—Whither should they go? who will receive a helpless wanderer and her unfriended son? Hagar hath served thee faithfully many years, and Ishmael is yet a child; his mind lacks instruction, and his age demands protection.—No, Sarah, I will not be guilty of this transgression, lest I bring the anger of the Lord upon my head, wherefore tempt me no further.

The wrath of Sarah was too much for speech; she strove not to answer him, but raised the infant to her bosom, and left the room. Abraham looked after her, then closed the door, and sat down upon a bench. My darling Ishmael! my first-born, long-loved son! cast thee forth!——Unjust and cruel Sarah! how art thou changed!—I will see her face no more this night, lest by her reproaches to me, she should draw on herself the displeasure of Heaven. Thus saying, he reclined himself on the seat to rest until morning.

When the voice of the Lord came to me in the plains of Mamre, what was the promise?—Behold, said God, I have blessed Ishmael thy son, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall be the father of twelve kings, and I will make him head of a mighty nation.—How could this promise be fulfilled, were I to cast him forth to perish of hunger or a broken heart? No, my child Ishmael shall be still cherished in my bosom for the purposes of the Lord, and the hand of evil shall not touch him.

The eyes of the Patriarch waxed heavy; sleep fell upon him, and in a dream, he beheld the room in which he lay. Suddenly the lamps were extinguished, and he was left in tenfold darkness; and now a blaze of glory flashed upon his sight, the seat beneath him trembled, and the voice of the Eternal was heard.

'Abraham, deliver thy son into my hands:—let it not be grievous in thy sight, because of the lad, and because of

the bond-woman. In all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken to her voice, for in Isaac shall thy posterity be called, and also of the son of the bond-woman will I make a nation, because he is thy son.'

The Patriarch awoke; he looked fearfully around, then sank upon his knees in silent prayer, awed and adoring.

Deliver him to thee! at length he cried; deliver him to thee, O Lord! Thou who called me forth from the land of idolatry: and shall I not when thou requirest him? And what if evil doth befal the lad; hath not evil its purposes?—Misery is thine agent, and affliction is thy messenger; but as night is succeeded by day, and cold by warmth, so hath every evil a twin blessing. If accidents befal not, or the red arm of cruelty be never exercised, compassion would have no wounds to bind; if the voice of the mourner be not heard, the lips of consolation must be closed. Should poverty be exiled from this world, charity would

pursue her steps, and thus would the heavenly thrones of brotherly love and divine gratitude be never filled. O were every evil recalled from the earth, then would myriads of holy seats be vacant, and prepared crowns of glory be unworn.——Ishmael! thou art called to trial; henceforth be thou the child of God alone.—Take him, Lord, O take him! he will prosper in the land, for thou hast said it; and if his heart be just, then will he be blessed above measure, for on earth thy choicest blessing is the union of power and will, in the person of the righteous.

Thus communed the Patriarch with his heart, until the glimmering dawn appeared on the summit of Mount Libnah.

Ishmael, on retiring to his bed, had wept bitterly; but his grief was as transient as it was excessive, for soon he turned his ardent mind to the pastimes

he should enjoy the next day with his youthful friends: and now these were soon forgotten, and he closed his wearied eyes in sleep. Not so did Sarah or Hagar pass the night. Sarah traversed her chamber in restless inquietude, and the bond-woman watched with maternal fondness beside the bed of her sleeping son.

Soft is the voice of the dove rejoicing over her tender brood; sweet is the murmur of the flowing brook when hastening to join a neighbouring stream; but softer and more gentle was the voice of Hagar when whispering, Awake, my Ishmael, awake! the birds are on the wing! the morn appears above the hills, and yet thou sleepest.—Alas! how deep that sigh!——Ishmael, my darling!—I must awake him, and yet it grieves me.

Laying her lips on his glowing cheek, she awoke him with a kiss. He started, and on beholding his mother hanging over him, he clasped his hands around her neck, and still heavy with

sleep, would have again closed his eyes on her bosom, when she roused him, saying, My child, dost thou forget the words I spake to thee last night? Arise, my Ishmael, or thy father will be gone to the field with the husbandmen ere we are prepared, and we require all his kindness, his protection, his loving intercession to reconcile us to our offended mistress; the sun hath gone down upon her anger, and O may we be forgiven ere it again arise! I have by me a raiment made of the soft hair of the camel, two head-tires of fine needlework, coral, crystal, and other precious things brought with me from Egypt. These we will lay at the threshold of Sarah's chamber, and when she comes forth, we will say with bended knees, and looks of humble submission, Sarah, our mistress, pardon our fault, and despise not the lowly gifts of thy servants. But, first, go thou, my child, and gather the fairest flowers and most fragrant herbs thy garden produces, to strew over the peace-offering;

and bring with thee the mandrakes thou didst find yesterday in the fields, for in such apples, Sarah takes great delight.

The idea of giving ever made the high heart of Ishmael burn with pleasure. Having thrown on his garments, he kissed his mother, and hastened to obey. Hagar then prepared the presents; and when she had arranged them on the floor without Sarah's apartment, she went forward, and opened the outward door of the dwelling, to watch for the return of Ishmael. Great was her surprise on beholding the Patriarch seated on the bench beneath the plantain, in deep and pensive meditation.

My lord, she cried, why art thou risen thus early? it is yet but the fourth hour of the morning; behold the men-servants and my fellow hand-maidens still sleep—the vapours of the night encompass thee—the grass is moist—the crown of thy head is wet with the dews of the morning, and the damps of the air hang upon thy beard.—Hagar! said the Patriarch.——My

lord!—speak, my lord, why dost thou falter in thy speech?——Last night, continued Abraham, thou didst tell unto Sarah what the Lord said unto thee when thou fleddest from Kirjath-arba to the wilderness of Shur; but thou didst conceal part of the words—wherefore didst thou so? I feared to increase the anger of my mistress, replied Hagar, by repeating to her the gracious promises concerning my son.

To which Abraham answered, that he was aged, and his memory failing him, he wished her to say what were those promises. Thus said the Almighty, replied the bond-woman :—'Hagar, thou shalt bear a son, and call his name Ishmael, because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall be multiplied exceedingly, and dwell in the presence of all his brethren.'

Abraham pondered on her words, and then demanded, if she looked for this

promise to be fulfilled; and on her replying, Yes, for the Lord had said it, he continued:—But Ishmael, though first-born, must be subject to Isaac, the son of my wedded Sarah. How then can he dwell in the presence of his brethren? To none but to the heir belong honors and command.——Thy servant, returned Hagar, is weak and unskilled, and hath not judgment to reason on the words of the Omnipotent. He hath said that Ishmael shall be the father of kings—I know not how it will come to pass, but I firmly believe.

And should I, said Abraham, be gathered to my fathers whilst thy son is yet a child, and he be turned forth to wander on earth, how then could a man of wretchedness become head of a mighty nation?—My lord, replied Hagar, pardon me, but thy words create surprise. Did I still worship the idols of my country, Isis, and Osiris, the stars, and scaly crocodile, then mightest thou well tempt my faith, but thou hast taught me to

know the great Creator, the God who called thee out of Ur of the Chaldees; on him my soul is fixed, and no evil can fall upon my son unless it be his will. Abraham, lifting up his hands, exclaimed with pious fervour, Blessed be her faith!—— Now mark me, Hagar; the hour of trial is at hand—great must be thy anguish, but glorious thy reward.

The bond-woman heard him not, her eyes being fixed upon Ishmael, whom she discerned afar, running down the slope of the hill. He comes! she cried, and was going forward to meet him on his way, when Abraham, rising, asked, What is he who approaches with such speed? To which she replied, smiling, Our son, thy Ishmael—and now he is lost to my view in a grove of myrtles——Hagar! My lord!—what means my lord? Thou art pale, O very pale! Said I not that the dews of the morning would bring on sickness? Enter the dwelling, and seek thy bed, so mayest thou sleep away this sudden chill.—Most revered Abraham,

wilt thou not hearken to the voice of thy servant? Why dost thou gaze on my face?—why trembles thy lip? Now verily such looks of anguish I never yet beheld—speak, Abraham, honored lord, father of my child! O speak, or thy heart will break.

The Patriarch strove to speak, but the sound died away—he turned from her, and took from beneath the bench whereon he had sat, a bottle of water and a loaf of bread; these he extended to Hagar, then laying them at her feet, pointed to the highway which led from his dwelling. His purpose, like lightning darting through the gloom of night, flashed upon the mind of the woman, and his words, 'turned forth to wander in wretchedness,' now struck upon her recollection like a tremendous sentence; cold dews burst from her forehead, dimness came over her sight—her heart sickened, and she sat down upon the bench.

Swift as the air-cutting eagle, graceful as the purple flax when waving in the wind,

and wild as the roebuck of the mountains—thus lovely, wild, and swift, young Ishmael rushed upon their presence. The fresh air of the morning had heightened the glow of his smiling cheeks, and as he ran, the breeze blew back the dark curls of his hair. On one arm, he carried a basket filled with flowers and balsamic herbs, with new-gathered fruits and mandrakes, and in his hands he held a panting bird.

I have climbed a tall tree, he cried, as he came towards them, and have seized a wood-pigeon on its nest. I will tame it for my brother Isaac, and it shall eat out of his hand, and nestle in his bosom. But when he drew near, and beheld the face of his father—a face of agony, and the eyes of his mother closed as in death, a faintness came over him—his hands were relaxed—the basket fell to the ground, and the wood-pigeon flew back to its nest.

Approaching Hagar, he threw his arms around her, saying, Mother, art

thou ill?—My father, say, what ails my mother? Hath Sarah again spoken to her unkindly? or is thy anger kindled against me for having disposed of the she-ass and its burden to the forlorn Nehazi? In this I but followed thy counsel, my father, which hath ever been to me—'Succour the unfortunate, and console the mourner.'

The voice of the lad brought back life to Hagar's bosom, she folded her arm round his waist, and looking up to Abraham, said—My lord—father of this boy—if thou hast done this but to tempt me—the child is young—his limbs are tender—even the kite puts not her little ones from the nest ere they be fledged:—suffer us to lay our gifts before the eyes of Sarah—she will relent—we will humble ourselves in the dust—she will forget the past. Why dost thou shake thy head? do I not know that the heart of my mistress is kind and compassionate when her wishes are not opposed.—Ishmael, my love, gather up thy fruits and flowers,

and follow me; we will bow so low—never will we cease weeping on her feet until we are forgiven.

She was entering the door, when the Patriarch, laying his hand upon her arm, said, in a solemn and determined voice, Hagar, thy doom is not from me; it hath passed the lips of God, and the fate of this child is written by his finger. Ye must go hence, and never again cross yon threshold. The Lord appeared to me this night in a vision, and hath required ye at my hands. Speak, wilt thou go forth under the protection of the Almighty, or by tarrying here, call down his anger on thy head? Hagar paused; she looked at Abraham, and then upon Ishmael. O put us not forth, said Hagar, faintly.—It is not I that put thee forth, replied he; it is the voice of God which calls both thee and thy son.—What were now thy words? saidst thou not, that on the Lord thy soul was fixed, and that no evil could befal thy child unless it was his will.

These were my words, returned Hagar, spoken in the bosom of security: thus a man shall say, How easy is it to leap from yonder precipice! but let him approach the brink, and he will start away affrighted. On the Patriarch's reminding her, that in early youth she confided in the Eternal, when he bade her return and submit to the hands of her mistress; the bond-woman replied, O Abraham, it is easier to obey the voice which says, 'Get thee from the wilderness to the house of comfort,' than that saying, 'Go thou and thy helpless child from the house of comfort, and perish in the wilderness.' Be not offended, my lord, but hear me with patience, I beseech thee.—Ishmael has never hungered, neither knows he what is thirst; the damps of night have never chilled his blood, or the meridian sunbeam scorched his head; never has his neck been bent to the yoke, or his presence regarded as nought. Ere I was taken into thy service, I felt all these; therefore a change so great may not

bring such bitterness to me. Behold there are merchantmen travelling daily from Mesopotamia to Egypt; I will join them, and return to Phatures, my native city, which lies at the western mouth of the Nile; peradventure some of my kindred yet live: but thou wilt keep my child—Ishmael may stay with thee; may he not, my lord? Take him—take him, Abraham; he is thy son, thy once darling Ishmael—wilt thou not take his hand?—O Abraham! whither is flown that justice, that tenderness, that uprightness which made thee the favored of the Most High, and the honored among men?——Then thou wilt give us a camel, or some other beast of burden, and lade it with provisions, and send us with a guide? at least, send Ishmael to thy brother Nahor, who dwells in Padan-aran; or to thy kinsman Lot, abiding on the banks of the river Jordan—so shall the lad, though far from hence, be safe, and Sarah contented. Say, my lord, shall it not be thus?

Hagar, hear me, answered the Patriarch: the Almighty hath said, 'Deliver thy son and his mother into my hands,' and shall I say, 'Nay, Lord, but into the hands of my kinsmen will I deliver them?' I repeat to thee once again, thou must away, and my son must also go.—Cold shiverings seized the limbs of Ishmael, and he exclaimed, whilst terror was in his face, and doubt in his eyes, Go! whither must I go?—from home?—Wherefore? Art thou not my father? Thy house is my house.—I cannot go—I know not where to go.——Say, my mother, what gave rise to this?—May we not stay?—why should we not stay?—I cannot go.

The sufferings of Abraham became insupportable, and he could no longer suppress his tears, which flowed down his cheeks, when he answered, Now God help thee, my beloved! but thou must, and speedily—yea, thou must not be here when Sarah shall rise; behold the sun appears above the hill.——Hagar!—my

son.—O gracious Creator and Preserver of all things in heaven and on earth, into thy hands, and at thy command, I give my child and its mother—feed, clothe, bless, and protect them!——Hagar, thou mayest judge by these sighs, these tears, this anguish of my soul, how severe this parting is to me; and yet I will kneel to thee, so thou wilt listen to my voice, and not tempt the anger of the Lord by further disobedience.

He would have fallen at the feet of the woman, had she not prevented him. Beloved, gentle, and most virtuous Hagar! continued he, folding her to his breast.—A long and mournful silence ensued; then, lifting her head from his shoulder, and casting up her eyes, in which was expressed the most extreme distress, she replied, I obey; but should Isaac die, then wilt thou think on Ishmael. I go—but in thy prayers to heaven, remember me, and this thy son. A little water, and a little bread, is then all the inheritance of my Ishmael! If

thou thinkest we can live when these are spent, great is indeed thy faith.—Ishmael, give me thy hand.

Stay, cried Abraham, and hesitated—I have not kissed him, let him receive my last kiss—he stooped, but his embrace was not returned. The Patriarch threw his arms around the waist of Ishmael, who, setting his hands against Abraham's breast, thus held him back, and gazed upon his countenance.

My father, said the lad, what have I done that thou shouldest shut thy door against me?—keep me, O keep me! where should we sleep?—there are no beds in the fields—the wild beasts would hunt and devour us—my mother would die with hunger, and I should die—canst thou feed cows, and sheep, and dogs, and not feed me?—Look, my mother, he smiles—he will not turn us away—he hath not the heart to do it—I said he would not turn us away—dear father—I love thee father. Thus Ishmael continued to stroke his face, and kiss his

beard, and eyes, and lips, until Abraham, no longer able to endure the scene, rose hastily, and with trembling hands placed the vessel of water and the bread on Hagar's shoulder.

My lord! said Hagar—Father! cried Ishmael—and tears choked his voice—my father! O he is gone—he is gone, he hath shut the door against us.—Then throwing himself on the ground, here will I die—my father to do this—my father whom I loved so much!—Hagar looked down upon him, she sighed, but could not weep.

My child—treasure of mine eyes, and darling of my heart—my precious Ishmael—wilt thou too forsake me? must I wander forth alone—canst thou abandon thy wretched mother?—deprived of thee, then indeed am I destitute. He raised his head, and sobbing, answered—Forsake thee! never—open thy arms to me, beloved mother—yes, we will go—we will—but my heart will break. O father—cruel—cruel father!

She took his hand, and with slow and lingering steps they left the house, and wandered towards the wilderness.

The day was come that Ishmael had appointed the hunter and his family to attend at the dwelling of his father. Nehazi, desirous of speaking to the youth before he went into the presence of the Patriarch, walked towards the tents alone, leaving his wife and children to wait for him in a grove of palms. He had been long absent, when the sportive Eziel, returned from chasing his brothers through the trees, ran joyfully to his mother, exclaiming—Look! my father comes to fetch us—again we shall behold the smiling Ishmael—how beautiful and fragrant were his garments! when he embraced me at parting, methought my face was buried in a bed of violets. Reumah took the hand of Eziel, and collecting her children together, rose

from the bank, and went forward to meet her husband, her heart glowing with hope and delight; but as Nehazi drew nearer, she beheld his countenance, and delight and hope fled her bosom.

Nehazi was followed by Natoch, who, casting his unpitying eyes around, perceived the she-ass grazing—he spake not, but seized the bridle, and led the beast away. When the servant was out of sight and hearing, Nehazi addressed his wife, saying—We must return, return my children, nor nearer approach the tents of Abraham. Reumah, canst thou carry thy little one in thine arms, whilst I take charge of Adah?—Elim and Nezdath walk ye on before, and thou, Eziel, give me my bow, and place on thy shoulders the pannier, containing the remainder of our provisions—now, indeed precious. The commands of Nehazi were obeyed, and they went slowly forward, the children marvelling at their father's looks, and Reumah seeing that therein, which forbade her to irritate him by questions.

They had travelled far without following any certain track, when, spent with weariness, and overcome by disappointment, the disconsolate Reumah stopped, and sat down on a bank in silence, Nehazi placed himself beside her.

Wife, said he, didst think we were human?—we are not—we are brutes in human form; brutes I tell thee, wife, and what shall prevent our becoming brutes of prey?——From hence, back to our native Lebanon, we must ravage our way like destructive locusts. Reumah, alarmed, raised her timid looks to his, and enquired whether he had seen the Patriarch, and what young Ishmael had said to him, and whither they were going. On which, he exclaimed, Ishmael! angel of heaven, where art thou? cast out to starve—turned from the doors of thy father, and by thy father's hand! Whither go we, dost thou ask—to the wilderness: in the wilderness we shall meet friends at every step, for when we tell the wild beasts that man is our

enemy, then will every wild beast be our friend.

O Nehazi, exclaimed Reumah, how idle is thy speech, how full of emptiness thy words! instead of telling me what passed when thou wentest to the tabernacles of Abraham, my ears are bated with angry words. What! have I not yet told thee, replied Nehazi, that four days since, at sun-rise, Ishmael and his mother were cast out to eat grass with the cattle of the field? His very father has sent them forth to graze in the desert, or to be stoned from the doors of a Jahulan. And is it even so? said Reumah—and she wept. O may Ishmael find an Ishmael! I envied his mother so blest a son; but, now, how great must be the anguish of her heart!—Dost thou know the cause, Nehazi? The man replied not, but starting from his seat, commanded them to rise and walk, for they had a task to do ere the fall of night.

Again they journeyed forward, and had reached the entrance to the wilder-

ness of Shur, when Reumah laying her hand on the arm of her husband, said, Hark, I heard a cry!—another!—the voice comes from the desert—again—List! dost thou not hear it?—Should it be the cry of a hyæna, remarked Nehazi—they listened, and the children, terrified at the shrieks they heard, clung round the knees of their parents.

Thrice had the sun sank behind the great sea, since Hagar and Ishmael quitted Gerar. On leaving the much loved plains where they had dwelt so many years, they kept the highway, marked in these parts by little heaps of stones, which served to direct the travellers journeying between Egypt and Canaan. The hope that Hagar fondly cherished, was that of meeting with some of these merchants, and of being able to prevail on them to take herself and child to her native country. Thus, three days

wore away, and each successive evening overtook them without her having beheld a human being, or a human habitation.—Where can we again with safety pass the night? said the forlorn mother, casting her eyes around. Ishmael pointed to a spreading fig-tree which grew at a distance from the road, the large expanding leaves offering a comfortable shelter. Thither they repaired; and to make a bed, whereon to lay their weary limbs, they pulled such leaves as were within their reach, and piled them in a heap at the foot of the tree.

Ishmael no sooner stretched himself on these than he fell into a deep sleep, but the anguish of Hagar's bosom forbade her enjoying this blessing, and she watched beside her fatherless child as watches the careful ewe beside the lamb. Evening faded away and night came on, and with it all the horrors of a dark and tempestuous night. She fixed her looks upon the last glimmer of twilight, and the despair of her heart was such as

might have been felt by him, who to escape the Deluge, climbed the highest tree on the loftiest mountain, and gazed upon the floating ark as it gradually disappeared, leaving him a prey to the rising waters.

Hagar listened to the winds, which rocked the tops of the pines and howled mournfully among the lower branches; she listened to the hootings of the owl, and the distant hissings of the serpent, and now terrors such as until that moment she had never felt, seized upon her senses: the hour was come when wolves rush forth to devour; when the lion, lashing his tawny sides, springs from his den, and the panther seeks food to feed his whelps. Their savage cries are mingled with the shrieks of hapless victims caught in their sleep and dragged to the caverns in the rocks. The sounds according to the changing of the winds, or the roving of the beasts, swelled upon the blast, or died away in dismal moanings.

Thus passed the third night. The

early sun-beam was welcome to the sight of Hagar, but more welcome the opening eyes of Ishmael—he awoke smiling, for he remembered not the past, but when he beheld the open sky, and himself stretched on a bed of leaves; when he felt the dews of night falling on his head from the boughs above, and he looked upon the pale countenance of his mother, all the past and the dreariness of their present situation rushed upon his mind, and he wept anew. Hagar kissed away his tears, and sighing wished that she could also weep.—Then would my heart be less oppressed, but—tears are all exhausted!

Having soothed his grief, they ate and drank, and prepared to pursue their way; Ishmael rose, but unable to proceed, stopped, saying, What is this?—I cannot walk—my joints are stiff, my feet are blistered, my flesh is sore and tender to the touch, and my legs feel as if heavy stones were tied to them—I cannot—I can walk no further. My child, replied

the wretched mother, we may not tarry in this place—what should we do here? I grant the endeavour is painful, but exert thyself, my Ishmael—lean on me—alas! alas! continued Hagar, faltering, and falling against the tree for support; neither can I stand—every limb suffers:—and yet could we once more gain the beaten track, we would rest and wait the coming of such who might pass;—should they be going into Egypt they will pity us, they will not refuse to take us with them—and if journeying the contrary way, then may they be prevailed on to spare us a little nourishment, for behold, my Ishmael, the bread is nearly consumed, and the water is all spent—come then, whilst we have strength left, let us exert it, and continue our way.

Ishmael hearkened to her voice, and they dragged their feeble limbs heavily along until they reached the extremity of the plain and entered on a sandy desert, which was bounded to the right by the skirts of a dark and gloomy wilderness.

Hagar stopped, fearing to proceed, and they sat down upon the last pile of stones —here these land-marks ceased, for from hence to the eastern limits of Egypt the traveller directed his course by the motion of the heavenly bodies. The panting Ishmael had thrown his garment over his head to protect it from the scorching rays of the sun, and was complaining of the torture his feet endured from the burning sand, when Hagar looking up, beheld the distant plain in motion; her heart beat quick, imagining that it proceeded from the coming of horsemen, but she was soon undeceived:—the south wind blew—the surface of the ground swelled high, and the sands beneath their feet rolled like the waves of the sea.

Hagar snatched the hand of Ishmael —the hurricane encreased—the rising dust encompassed them;—nearly choked and blinded by the flying sands, they covered their faces with their raiment, and fled together towards the wilderness.—

They had scarcely reached the trees when noon was turned into night by the clouds of dust that filled the air. To avoid the scorching sands, which the whirlwind continued to drive after them, they burst through the entangled bushes, and penetrated far into the depths of the forest.

And now they stopped to breathe. The brambles had rent their garments in pieces, and torn away the curls of Ishmael's head, and the long loose hair of Hagar, which flowed upon her naked shoulders. The latchets of their shoes had in their flight snapped asunder—these they had long left behind among the briers, and they were now barefooted—their flesh was wounded in many places, their feet were stung and galled by nettles, by stones, and prickly shrubs, and streams of blood ran down their limbs.—But these were trifling evils compared to that of excessive thirst.

Where, O where shall we find water? said Hagar, who perceived that Ishmael gasped for breath, and who was herself

fainting with heat and drought.—They had wandered many hours through the thickest part of the wilderness, seeking water, when Ishmael shrieked, and fell upon the grass.—Another thorn hath pierced my foot—deep, O very deep! he cried—I can go no further, beloved mother, I can go no further—here let me die—I cannot rise. Hagar sat down beside him and strove to draw out the thorn, but it broke in his flesh—he groaned in pain, and seizing the vessel that had contained the water, and which was slung by a string upon her arm, he raised it to his parched lips, then instantly letting it fall, he gave her a look which pierced her heart.

Not one drop!—no, not one drop left, sighed Ishmael mournfully—my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth—I thirst—mother, give me drink—feel my lips.—Is all the water spent?—I thirst, give me drink—pity a helpless child—Almighty Lord, do not forsake me!—O mother, give me drink! His voice died away in murmurs—his

eyes closed, his arm sank from beneath his head—pangs shook his limbs—he moaned—he became convulsed, and turned upon his face. Hagar rose, her hands clasped in agony: she looked down upon him, and perceiving that he still struggled—said, in the low and smothered voice of bitter anguish—The hand of death is on him!—is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?—he dies—I cannot see him die—O let me not see the death of the child! With hurried step, still looking back, she quitted the place, and, when at some distance, sat down over against him, her features assuming that placid smile of despair, that calm and fixed look, which surely fortels the heart will break.

And now, when mental and bodily affliction had reached their utmost height; when nature could endure no more; when the soul of Ishmael hovered on his lips, and the heart of Hagar but awaited the signal to burst; the hand of the Lord was stretched forth to save: He knows how far temptation may be carried,

and never tempts beyond what the strength can bear. The sufferings with which he had inflicted the bond-woman and her son, were to work a purpose: hitherto, under the protection of the Patriarch, they had lived a life of delicacy and ease—but now their days were to be those of hardship—they were to labour for their subsistence, and to mingle with the humblest of the human race. To reconcile them to these things, which otherwise they would have scorned and rejected, it was necessary to bow them even to the dust: to make them suffer hunger, thirst, heat, cold, pain, solitude, and tribulation of the soul to excess, then would the slightest alleviation of these evils appear a blessing.——They had suffered, and had not repined: they had endured, and had not murmured—and now was come the moment when the love of the Creator was to manifest itself.

The angel of the Lord stood at the door of Abraham's dwelling, when Hagar

and Ishmael were cast from it, and had received them from the hands of the Patriarch. Although invisible, he had accompanied their steps: he had watched over them when on their bed of leaves, and had protected them from the beasts of prey.—He heard the secret sighings of her bosom, and beheld the tears of the lad; he went with them to the desert, shielding them with his outstretched wings from the clouds of burning sand; he led them to this spot in the wilderness, and now shewed himself in full glory to the eyes of Hagar. The air was filled with spicy fragrance, a silver cloud floated beneath the angel's feet as he hovered over her, from which proceeded brilliant stars, no sooner seen than extinguished, and from its swelling bosom fell drops of heavenly balm. A soft smile of pity and consolation appeared on his celestial countenance, as he looked down upon her, saying—

Hagar, what aileth thee? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad

where he is—arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation.

He extended his arm: her eyes followed the motion of his finger, and she beheld at her right hand, by the angelic radiance which illumined the place around, a well of water. A loud cry burst from her lips: so loud and piercing was her cry, that a fallow deer, which slept beside the well, started from its covert and gazed upon her.—Hagar fetched the vessel, and filled it with water, then went back to where Ishmael lay—she raised his head, and laying it on her lap, gently moistened his burning lips and tongue—by degrees, she poured water down his throat—and watched until the spirit of the child returned—he sighed—he opened his languid eyes, and spake.—Rapture and gratitude smote upon her heart at hearing the sound of his voice, and she had only sufficient strength left to snatch her re-

stored Ishmael to her throbbing breast, when she fainted.

Nehazi, who had kindled a fire, and lighted several torches, ere he ventured to penetrate into the gloomy forest, was now near at hand, followed by his wife and little ones. Directed by the cry of Hagar to the spot where she lay, Nehazi advanced, regardless of the remonstrances of his wife, who beseeched him not to go forward. What if you rouse a sleeping lion! she said; how much have we already suffered by the bite of a wild beast? Something moves at the foot of yon tree—return Nehazi, beloved Nehazi, let us return, and not thus expose these children to certain destruction.

The man replied not, but with a rapid arm, snatched a lighted brand from Eziel, his own being extinguished, and thrust it forward. What is here? he cried—It cannot be!—Reumah, Eziel, look—lay down your burdens, and draw near—a child clasped in the arms of a

woman!—Now, soul of Hevi, who are these? Eziel stooped, and having examined the features of the youth, exclaimed, O, my father, it is Ishmael!—Ishmael awake, open thine eyes—speak to us—his cheek is cold—his hands are stiff—his feet are covered with blood;—Ishmael awake, beloved Ishmael awake. Weeping, he kissed the pallid face of the lad. Open heaven and look down upon this sight, said Nehazi; weep ye angels, weep over this young one, this charitable outcast, this compassionate sufferer, this blessed wanderer:—behold a helpless child and his mother, thrown in one moment from the lap of plenty, joy, and tenderness, to perish in the most extreme distress.

Reumah reminded Nehazi that lamentations were useless, and advised him to kindle fires, whilst she supported the female in her arms. Nehazi and Eziel broke branches from the trees, and the children collected sapless sticks and withered leaves, which they placed in a

wide circle around them, and set on fire. Thus secured from the danger of wild beasts, for night approached, (the fourth night since Hagar and Ishmael were cast forth,) Nehazi threw himself on the ground, and taking the swollen feet of the youth on his knees, prepared, with careful and deliberate hand, to draw out the thorns; he then washed the blood from the wounds with water from the new-discovered well, and anointed them with oil. Reumah performed the like kind offices to Hagar, and to make bandages for their mangled feet, her husband took from his arm part of the linen which Ishmael had bound around it in many folds.

In the mean time, the children spread the remainder of the provisions on the grass, then watched the faces of Hagar and her son, anxious to behold the return of life. The eyes of Ishmael again opened to the light, and he gazed by turns, on every countenance around him, when, perceiving his mother, he en-

deavoured to approach her. Nehazi understood his wish, and raising him in his arms, seated him by Hagar, who, when recovered, hung fondly over him. The tender-hearted Eziel, wiping away his tears with his hand, offered bread and venison to Ishmael, who snatched the food from the child, and devoured it with eagerness.

Hagar also took the meats presented her by Reumah, and still as they fed, they enquired, who are ye? Angels ye must be—ye have saved my child—my mother owes her life to your kindness, say, who are ye?

Tears choked the voice of Reumah, and Nehazi, in silence, gazed with an eye of frenzy upon Ishmael, as he ate the provisions given him by the smiling children, who pressed him to partake of what each himself preferred.—Good child! replied the youth, yea, I will eat of that likewise—my hunger is so great —mother, hast thou food also?—Thanks, gentle child, I was indeed hungry, and

my thirst—ye who have never thirsted, cannot conceive how great was mine.

The anguish of Nehazi could no longer be restrained—he groaned, and sobbed aloud, at which Hagar and her son expressing great surprise, asked, Why dost thou weep, kind stranger?—speak, charitable woman, why weepest thou? Nehazi, falling at Ishmael's feet, and kissing his hands and knees, replied, Ishmael, my young lord, dost thou not know me?—Know thee! said the lad, raise thy face, that I may look upon it—is it?—O my God, it is Nehazi!—Nehazi is it thou? He fell, exhausted with emotion upon the hunter's neck, and they wept over each other, whilst Reumah knelt at the feet of the bond-woman, who raised her to her grateful bosom. Forsake me not, cried Ishmael, O Nehazi, do not forsake me.—I have now no father, no home—wilt thou be my father? wilt thou protect my mother?—I will love thee, most faithfully will I love thee, if hou too wilt not cast me off—I can love—

I know how to love—Nehazi, shall I be thy son?

Ere I forsake thee, cried the hunter, (with a warmth that might have been mistaken for the violence of anger, for all his passions were impetuous,) ere I forsake thee, may my heart and all its bleeding strings be torn from this bosom! I will enfold thy precious body in my arms, and ere danger touch it, my sinews shall be hacked asunder!—Protect thy mother! yes, with my life I will protect her, dear and honored Ishmael!—how greatly hast thou suffered for having disobeyed thy father, in giving me those presents which he designed for the wealthy Jahulan! all thy distresses have flowed from their wrong disposal, and yet, by the wonder-working hand of Providence, thou art now indebted for life, to those very gifts.—The food thou seest before thee, is part of that thou gavest me; the balms which comfort thy wounds, were thy charitable gift; and that linen on thy feet, was once the

turban of which thou generously robbedst thy head, to bind around my grieved arm. I went to thy father's dwelling, as thou didst command me, but saw him not, for he is visited by sickness, and was driven thence by the keeper of the asses, who informed me of what had passed.

O cruel Natoch! exclaimed Ishmael, but kind Natoch, when compared to my father—father! O, I have no father now! Eziel, throwing his arms round the neck of the youth, replied, my father will be thine, dear Ishmael: although he is poor, he will love thee, and thou wilt soon forget the mighty Abraham.

My child, said Hagar, embracing him—hear me; reproach not thy father Abraham, neither set thy mind against him; he is just, he is holy, and blessed in his faith! I am now assured that in putting us forth, and thus separating thee, Ishmael, from Isaac, the child of promise, he but obeyed the word of the Lord. Here, even now, in this wilderness, I have heard the voice of the Most High, speaking consolation to my heart.

—He hath visited me in affliction, and comforted me in tribulation.—O never may my soul forget his bounty, never may it be unmindful of his mercies!—On the sacred spot, beside yon well, where his glory appeared to me, will we abide, and if thou canst prevail on these kind and pious strangers to take up their abode with us, happiness will yet be ours, for twice have I had assurances from God of his grace, and thy future prosperity.

Be it so, said Nehazi, for the Almighty will bless the spot where this young one dwells. Until my right arm was torn by the leopard, I never lacked food. Eziel is too tender to bend the bow, but thou, my young lord, Ishmael, hast strength of nerve, and soon thou wilt arrive at manhood. Thy servant will instruct thee in the arts of a hunter, and fashion a bow to thy youthful arm, with which thou shalt kill the coney, the hare, and the dappled fawn; and when my vigour returns, I will range the forest, and bring to thy feet the full-

grown deer, the bezoar, the wild milch camel, and the untamed heifer of the woods.

Although cast off, said Reumah, smiling on the bond-woman, we may yet be happy, for wherever thy son takes up his abode, angels will attend him still.

The words they spake inspired the youth with confidence, and he said, Kneel my mother, I beseech thee, and thou Nehazi, Reumah, children kneel with me to the God of my father Abraham.—Here in the wilderness will we dwell, outcasts of man, one kind, united, loving family. I am Ishmael the rejected, and will henceforth be Ishmael the wild: unbounded liberty, and love to these my only law. Nehazi give me thy hand—and now, O gracious Creator! look down upon us, prosper this Hevite, guard his wife and little ones, defend my mother Hagar from danger, bless me thy servant Ishmael, and make our covenant everlasting.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

PATRIARCHAL TIMES.

BOOK II.

ISHMAEL.

ARGUMENT.

Isaac and his young companions assemble in the valley of Besor—Abraham seeks and finds Amariah, an idolater, called the Wandering Mourner, and takes him home—Amariah laments the loss of his only child; rejects consolation, and goes away abruptly—The Lord commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac—Ishmael and Eziel hunting in the wilderness of Paran—They seize Amariah, and force him to their tents—The return of Hagar, from Egypt, whither she went to select a wife for her son—Ishmael's reception of his bride—The marriage feast—Amariah saved from destruction—The journey of Abraham and Isaac to Mount Moriah—Amariah's conversion.

A VALLEY through which, in many windings, flowed the clear stream Besor, seemed beautiful in the eyes of the children of those who dwelt upon the sides and summits of the surrounding hills, and here they daily met to enjoy their smiling hours in merriment, and harmless

pastime. The only level way from the valley, led to the tabernacles of Abraham, which were now pitched to the south of Gerar.

The rising of the sun above Mount Hobah is the given signal, and the children appear running down the slopes of the hills; they meet each other with joyful greetings, and echo repeats the glad sounds of their mirthful voices.—And now the gay youths run in wanton sport: some leap the narrow stream, and others, dropping their garments on the grass, plunge into its shallow waters. The younger with infantine delight, hunt the chirping grasshopper, or follow the bright winged insects from flower to flower, whilst Isaac and Jemuel, seated beneath the willows of the brook, find amusement in listening to the call of the parrot, in imitating the cuckow, and in watching the soaring lark.

Suddenly, Isaac, starting from the ground, pointed, with smiles, to the entrance of the valley: Behold, he said,

My father, and Sarah, my mother! I have long beseeched her to repair to this, our chosen spot, and view its beauties, and see she complies with my wish; but my father comes to behold the silent man, who is so often seen wandering on these mountains. At the approach of the Patriarch and his wife, the youths arose, and bowed themselves before them. Sarah smiled on her beauteous Isaac, and caressed the children whom he had selected for his companions, but Abraham looked at his son with displeasure in his countenance.

Leaning on his staff, he addressed him, saying—Hast thou opened the pen and led thy young lambs to water? The child trembled, and looking on the ground, answered—No, my father.—Hast thou fed the nestlings, which the mower found in the field, and gave thee to rear?—No, my father, and his cheek turned pale.—But, Isaac, thou hast on thy knees, said, Bless me, O my God, this day?—and Isaac wept. On

which, Abraham turning to the children, whose mirth was now changed to sorrow, enquired, had they performed the morning duties assigned them by their parents: on receiving their answer, he continued, Then I must separate the transgressor from the obedient. It is not just that the diligent should keep company with the neglectful, for in so doing, they also may fall from their uprightness.—Isaac, three days shall pass, and thou not see these thy companions, or this thy favorite valley; return to the dwelling, my son, and abide in thy chamber, until the time of penitence be past.

Grief, submission, and humility were expressed in the lovely countenance of Isaac: he bowed his head to Abraham, and was turning to obey, when Sarah detained him, saying—Nay, my lord, be not thus severe to the child—he forgot his duties; pardon him, and he will sin no more. Not so, my mother, replied Isaac, I did not forget them, but I sought to be in the valley earlier than my com-

panions, therefore omitted my prayers, and disregarded my lambs and linnets. Now, said Abraham, now thou art again my well-beloved child! thou knowest that thou must endure the punishment of thy fault; but say, what shall be the reward of thy truth? The cheek of Isaac blushed with gladness, as he answered, My father, when I have performed these things, give me one kiss.

A tear of affection trembled in the eye of Abraham, but Sarah marvelled, saying, Why, how is this, my son? thou sayest to me, give me for my rewards, sweet confections, dried fruits, and gay sheep-rods; daily thou employest me to make garlands, no sooner woven than destroyed —and although from morn to evening twilight, I but attend upon thy pleasures, never didst thou ask of me a kiss.—Wherefore need I ask? replied Isaac, when thou, my mother, dost kiss me from the hour I wake until that I sleep. Yesterday, when I ran and restored the fallen staff to the hand of Alam, who is old and

infirm, thou smiledst; and when I called my kid a tiger, and hunted it through the field with a scourge, thou didst also smile—thou shouldst not caress me at all times alike, but as my father doth, only when I deserve it. Sarah was reproved: she felt the truth of his words, and the blush of conviction stole over her countenance—which Isaac perceiving, he clasped his arms around her neck, and embraced her tenderly.

Abraham now turned his attention to the motive of his coming to the valley, and enquired of Jemuel concerning the wanderer, of whom Isaac had spoken to him—on which the youth replied—My lord, no one knows who he is, or from whence he comes—my father, and other shepherds, have often crossed his steps, and strove to speak to him, but he shuns the face of man, wherefore he is called the Silent Mourner. He lives on wild fruits, and drinks at our wells; he wanders from field to field, and from hill to hill, and last week pitched his tent at the foot of

yon mountain. Then, laying his hand on the Patriarch's arm, and pointing with the other, he continued, I behold him! Dost thou see, my lord? Look through yon trees, and thou wilt distinguish a figure clothed in black. It is the mourner, who ever thus walks like one following the dead to the grave: and now he goes towards his tent.

The heart of Abraham being interested by this account, he was resolved to seek the stranger, and strive to learn the source of his grief. And I, said Sarah, will return with Isaac to the dwelling, but if in thy power, bring this mourner with thee, for, perchance, our words may administer comfort. The children having promised Isaac not to meet in the valley until the days of his penance were accomplished, dispersed to their several abodes, and Abraham went towards the stranger's tent.

He entered, and found it empty, but passing through the opposite door, he there beheld him seated on the trunk of

a fallen cocoa tree. Abraham spake not, but placed himself at some distance on the body of the same tree; on which, the stranger lifted up his eyes, seemingly irresolute whether to stay or retire within the tent. In him, the Patriarch beheld a very man of sorrow, his hair and beard were rough and neglected, his looks were bereft of animation, and his cheek was void of colour; his garments were rent by brambles, or by the emotions of frenzy and despair, and his hands were sullied by the dust, which he daily heaped upon his head.

We have the promise of most plenteous crops this year, said Abraham, half addressing him—the Spring hath been marvellously backward—our pastures shew for abundance, and the sprouting corn looks kind and healthy. The stranger gazed on the Patriarch, who thus continued: The waters of this place lie low—my labourers dug a well a few weeks back, in the grove of Beer-sheba, and the spring was thirty cubits

deep.—Wert thou ever at Beersheba?—he paused; then, I have travelled from Mesopotamia, even into Egypt, and never yet remarked a people happier than are these Philistines; the land seems to be divided equally among them, wherefore they are cheerful and kind to one another.—How well favoured are the women of Gerar, and how beautiful the children! to my aged eyes, they resemble blooming angels sent by heaven to deck the earth with loveliness.

These words seemed to shoot a sudden pang into the heart of the mourner—starting from his seat, he looked wildly around, then sighed, and smote his breast. Abraham thereby divined that he lamented the loss of a wife or of a child. Laying his hand upon the body of the cocoa tree whereon he sat, The arm of wantonness, said he, hath cut thee down, monarch of trees! thou once yieldedst food, drink, raiment, and shelter, yet not content with these thy bounties, they have robbed thee of thy darling young one—thy

verdant rose, which lay hid on thy summit, wrapped in cherishing leaves, I find is gone! How wonderful that the parent tree should die, when its tender fruit is stolen! The stranger sighed, and fixed his eyes on Abraham, who was thus communicative, in hopes of drawing forth the cause of his sorrow.—Never with me do the hours hang heavy—from the rising of the sun, to the going down thereof, I am with my bond-men in the field.—This land is not my native country, Chaldea gave me birth, I fled from thence, but they of Damascus and of Egypt received me; I taught astronomy to the Egyptians, but I have no one now to teach.—Dost thou behold yon path? it stretches to my tabernacles, thou seest we are neighbours, why should we not be friends?

The heart of the mourner melted within him, at the soft and soothing words of the Patriarch, and he replied, I also am a stranger in this land, for I was born at Luz.—At Luz! exclaimed

Abraham, my soul rejoices in this, for I sojourned in the plains without that city many months, and perchance, if late from thence, thou canst give me tidings of those friends who were dear to me when I abode in Canaan. May I, kind stranger, ask thy name? On his answering that his name was Amariah, the astonishment of the Patriarch was great, and he cried, Amariah! peradventure, thou art akin to Amariah the Canaanite, the wealthy lord of Haï, whose flocks, when I dwelt in the land, covered the hills around:—yes, his tents whitened the spacious vallies, and his riches in gold, in silver, in ivory, slaves, and camels far exceeded those of his neighbours. It was told me, that he had taken to wife the beauteous sister of Abimelech the king, that she died a few months after marriage, but that he had still a child, a daughter, a little one whom he loved, or rather idolized.

At these words, the voice of Amariah was lifted up:—I am that man, he cried,

Amariah the Canaanite. I have herds and gold, flocks and camels, and my tents whiten the hills and vallies: my wife hath been dead twelve years, and three months back, I had a child, a little one.— He groaned, and hiding his face in his garment, wept aloud! When the emotions of his grief were spent, Abraham approached, and taking his hand, said, Amariah, look up, thou must not live thus in solitude, or misery of heart will end thee: come to my house, beloved friend, and there find comfort in my bosom: thou shalt see my wife, who will assist me in weaning thee from thy sorrows; as yet thou art young, and shouldest make hope and pleasure thy companions—this is the season of joy, not of grief; come then with me, thou wilt be of service in explaining many properties of this soil, of which I am yet unacquainted—dost thou not know me? hast thou not heard of Abraham, the son of Terah, the Chaldean?

A traveller, journeying through a forest, if he perceive a tiger crouching

beside a tree preparing to spring upon him, darts back in horror and affright, thus started Amariah, at the name of Abraham. Long he gazed upon him with eyes of detestation, then breaking away, rushed into his tent, the door of which he closed after him. The Patriarch astonished at this abrupt departure, stood some time motionless, until, fearing that sorrow had made a dangerous impression on the mind of the stranger, he became apprehensive of his own safety, and hastily quitted the spot: but he had scarcely reached the entrance of the valley, when, turning his head, he perceived Amariah at his side.

They walked in silence to the door of Abraham's dwelling, when the Patriarch, taking his hand, led him to a chamber where was seated Sarah working at her loom. The venerable matron, giving a look of congratulation to her husband, rose and welcomed Amariah, then went forth to the servants, and ordered cakes of fine meal, meat, milk, honey, and

fruits, to be placed before him; adding, Let water be also brought to comfort the feet of our guest, and prepare a bed, for he will abide with us.

Whilst the damsels obey the voice of their mistress, said Abraham, wilt thou, my friend, go forth with me into the mower's field? Thou shalt behold how rich are my crops of hay and clover; these are already stacked, and shew a pleasing prospect: moreover, I seek to know what hath been the progress, since dawn, of those who plough a field I lately purchased of my neighbour Ephron —wilt thou bear me company? Amariah replied not, but seating himself, meditated some few moments, and then— If thou art Abraham of Haran, in Chaldea, thou hast a son born to thee some four-and-twenty years past in Kirjath-arba; let me look on the young man. Upon the Patriarch's answering that the youth did not now abide with him, Amariah exclaimed, Then the rumour which went through the land was

true? O Abraham, thou unnatural father! why didst thou act so by thy young son, and his helpless mother?—how often hath my heart rebuked thee on their account!

My friend, said Abraham, in whose voice and features mildness and dignity were happily blended, Thou heardest I cast him out, but peradventure thou dost not know that the word of God came to me, saying, 'Give thy child into my hands, and he shall prosper in the land.' Then was the indignation of Amariah kindled afresh, and he replied, that *he* would have disobeyed, although commanded by ten thousand of his gods; on which, Abraham calmly intreated him to say what he had heard concerning the object of his worship.

It was told me, answered Amariah, that during thy residence in Padan-aran, thou wert a maker of images, but that to the wonder of all men, thou didst on a sudden cast thy graven idols in the fire, saying, there was but one God, an ethe-

real Spirit; an eternal, omniscient, and immutable Being: for which declaration, the Chaldeans rose against thee, and thou didst flee into Canaan. Yes, replied the Patriarch; it was even as thou sayest:—until I sought and found the living God, I was an idolater. I asked the carved wood to lengthen my days, and the sapless image to give me health. I fashioned a statue of molten silver, and bowed down before the work of my hands. I adored the brute nourished by my care, and demanded protection from the herbs planted by my labour; but when I reflected that all things perished, I asked how could I be indebted for life to that which could not ensure life to itself? The glorious sun then appeared to me deserving of worship, until my mind inquired by whom was that sun made.

And where, demanded Amariah, didst thou seek, and where find thy living God?—I examined the texture of a flower, and called it admirable; I watched the motions of an insect, and beheld its or-

gans perfect; I strove to build a nest, but the sparrow was the better workman. I beheld the cranes fly against the wind, and the fishes against the stream, and I asked who had taught them thus to protect their feathers and their scales. I marked the birds of passage, and said to the new-fledged swallow prepared for flight, Why thus leave thy home for distant and unknown regions? wilt thou find food and congenial air whither thou goest? who instructs thee when to depart? who will guide thy course through the trackless firmament? and how wilt thou know the season to return? I saw the wood-pecker turn her eggs, that they might equally receive the vital warmth, and the partridge trail her wing before the ensnarer, to beguile his footsteps from her young. I observed that the wild beasts slept while man was abroad, and that they sought their prey when man slept. How equally, said I, are the waters balanced, and how great the influence of the stars! The move-

ments of the planets, the changes of the moon, the repelling and attracting qualities of the sun, all—all alike marvellous and sublime. Whom do these things obey? what hand doth direct the great machinery of the universe, and for whom were all these goodly wonders created? I then looked upon myself, I examined my limbs, my powers, my senses.—There is a Providence! I cried, and the idols of wood dropped from my hand. There is but one God! I exclaimed, the Almighty, Creator of all things in heaven and on earth, source of all good and harmony, and henceforth him only will I worship! O Amariah, at these words my heart burned within me as within a furnace: I felt as one struck with lightning, and long lay entranced on the ground. Thus sought I the most high God, and he ever meets those who seek him.

Abraham paused, when Amariah, who had sat wrapped in meditation, sighing, spake—I have now no child to inherit my wealth—my wealth hath lost its

value—that which is most precious in my eyes is the little garment she wore when she died; it is the pillow of my bed, and shall be to me a pillow in the grave. O when I looked to see her each hour gather new strength, and rise in stature, glowing with ripened beauty! — How often have I marked the youthful sons of my neighbours, and, in mind, elected the comeliest to be the future husband of my Elisheba.—How often have I fancied I saw her children playing around my aged limbs——daughter, wife, mother, babes, all my hopes destroyed at one stroke!

Abraham looked upon the afflicted father, and laying his hand upon the knee of Amariah, replied—My friend, the blossom which is untimely blown from the tree, was never designed to become an apple: the embryo crushed by the fall of the egg, was never intended to become a bird, and thy child was not born to be a woman; she lived her allotted time, and was recalled in full maturity, for when the hand of the Lord

goes forth to gather souls, he best knows those which are ripe for his holy purpose. Recalled! repeated Amariah, who recalled her? did I not, with my own hands, lay her tender body and dead spirit in the grave?

A sudden light, radiant and divine, shone in the eyes of the Patriarch: he stretched his right hand to heaven, and then—In the name of the living God I tell thee, Canaanite, the soul never dies! Hear me, the wings of the butterfly are folded in the skin of the caterpillar, the covering of the worm perishes, but the fly bursts forth, gloriously arrayed, to sip the dew, and wanton in the sun beam. Thus the soul of thy daughter, invisible to mortal eyes, cast off the body, and took wing to heaven, there to dwell, through all eternity, with God its Creator, its Father, and Protector.

His words were unheard by Amariah, who mournfully observed, that he had one day checked his Elisheba, and denied her request: O had I known her days

would have been thus shortened, I would have rifled nature of every gift to please her, and flown on the wings of the morning to gratify her wishes. Beloved Elisheba! lost to me in the bloom of childhood!

The feet of thy little one, replied Abraham, might have gone astray, for though the bud be fair, it is never proof to the canker or the locust, and hadst thou not lost a child, heaven might have lost an angel: had she lived to maturity, and fulfilled thy fondest hopes, the thorn which hath pierced thy heart might also have pierced hers, and she too might have bewailed the loss of a darling child; and let me, Amariah, let me remind thee of another source of consolation—the despair to which thou resignest thy soul might better become an aged man like me—thou art still young, and may yet be blessed with a numerous offspring.

I hear the singing of the birds, said Amariah, and think it is her song, when

standing by my bed she each morning thus awoke me: at meals I look around to give my Elisheba what is most grateful to her, and when I see her not, my breath is suppress, I endure the torture of suffocation, and fly my food. My wife, when she lived, was the idol of my heart, and had she not left a child I would have followed her to the grave; and now to be bereaved of my little one!—I quitted Luz, I wandered to Salem, to Gerar, to Beersheba; I seek her from place to place, but like a meteor she flies from me, yet is her beauteous face ever before mine; methinks I now behold her dimpled cheeks, her golden hair which fell in soft curls over her blue and smiling eyes, her airy form when sporting in the fields, or hanging on my neck; and when she called me father—her sweet and gentle voice!——O how my heart ever leaped at the sound of her voice!

Whilst he yet spake, the inner door of the chamber was opened by Isaac, who ran forward, crying aloud, with all the

eagerness of youthful delight—Father! kiss me, beloved father! I have fed my linnets, and led my lambs to water, and prayed the blessing of the Lord, now, therefore, my father, perform thy promise, give me one kiss. Clasping his arms round Abraham's neck, he seized his reward, and continued to hang upon him with the fondest love, when the Patriarch, affrighted at the looks of Amariah, who started from his seat, put the child from his embrace, and hastily arose.

O sight of horror! exclaimed the Canaanite, what do I behold?—thou cruel, thou insulting man! take him from me, take him away—thou hast stabbed my heart—this sight makes my wounds bleed afresh. Dost thou deserve this blessing, thou caster-off of sons? well mayest thou talk to me of resignation, possessing such a treasure as this. My soul again abhors thee! didst thou bring me here to awaken my grief, and triumph over my sorrows? He resembles—O how he resembles my lost child! such

was her age—thus she looked, thus heavenly she smiled, thus delicate and blooming was her form. O never again shall I behold my Elisheba, never again will she call me father, she is gone, she is dead, she will never return to me.

He wept, he sobbed, and deaf to the voice of Abraham, who requested him to tarry yet a little while, he turned away, and with rapid steps took his departure. The Patriarch, fearing some danger might befal him, seized his staff, and hastily followed, but in the grove of Beersheba he lost sight of him.

Spent with fatigue, and overcome by the heats of noon, which were not yet past, the venerable Abraham found the pursuit unequal to his strength, and leaned for support against a tree. Thus alone, he communed with his thoughts.

How fearful is it to set our happiness on the withering flower of a day!—The loss of wealth would be the greatest blessing which could, at this moment, befal Amariah, for were he delivered over to

poverty, labour would banish grief, and self-preservation prevail over immoderate sorrow. Riches weaken the mind, and indolence ever nourishes the lamentations of the heart: and yet had Amariah beheld my emotions yesterday at the sight of my darling Isaac's blood, when he but slightly wounded his finger, how might he have reproached my weakness! thus we reprove others, ever blind to our own infirmities. I, who have never yet lost a child by death, can be no judge of Amariah's feelings. The imaginations of other parents must, methinks, be a constant prey to doubt, as to the preservation of their offspring, whilst I, building my hopes and security on the sure foundation of the Lord's most gracious promise, am freed from the fears which perchance torture their breasts—what am I that I should be thus highly favoured? how great should be my gratitude, how ardent my devotion! how often hath it been repeated to me that Sarah, my wife, should be mother of nations, and kings of

people be of her; that the covenant should be renewed with Isaac, the child of promise, and with the posterity of Isaac. Having thus the word of the Lord as a pledge for the safety of my son, how tender should I be of the parental sorrows of my neighbours, among whom are doubtless to be found hearts purer than my own.

And now, subdued by heat, Abraham bares his bosom, panting for breath. Withdraw thy beams, O sun! blow ye soft western winds, and recal his fleeting spirits!—The winds of heaven arose, and the sun withdrew his beams: the song of the birds ceased, the grove became agitated, the branches of the cypress against which he leaned, waved with rapid motion, and a loud noise was heard like to the rushing past of a flock of sheep, or that made by the out-stretched pinions of an eagle. Abraham felt the presence of the Lord, a sacred dread came over him, the staff forsook his hand, and he prostrated himself on the earth.

Thus spake the voice of God—

'Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest. Get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him up there for a burnt sacrifice upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of.'

The voice was heard no more, the birds renewed their song, the boughs of the cypress were motionless, the winds of heaven were at rest, and the sun again darted forth his beams; but the moon had climbed over the summit of the hills ere Abraham arose from the earth to return to his dwelling.

The sun appears in the eastern sky, the fresh air dispels the vapours of night, and the archer springs from his bed. Flee to your coverts, fearful fallow-deer! tarry not to browse on the grass which skirts the wilderness, for the bow is bent. Why stop to gaze in the streamlet, in ad-

miration of thy branching horns, poor trembling hart? Haste, and erect thy head, prick up thy ears, and run with the wind, so shalt thou hear from afar the loud cries of the hunters. Descend not from the high hills, ye climbing goats; shrink into the crevices of the rocks, ye timid conies, for they are abroad who seek your lives.

A shrill cry echoed through the forests, and forth from the northern skirts of the wilderness of Paran rushed two bowmen. Their shapes were tall, their strong limbs embrowned by the sun, and their cheeks crimsoned by the wind of the mountains and the exercise of the chace. The elder, whose stature was kingly to the sight, wore a royal lion's skin, and the younger that of a tawny wolf: their legs and arms were naked, and their heads uncovered; quivers filled with stone-pointed arrows were slung across their shoulders; in their hands they grasped bows four cubits in length, formed of palm-wood, and the twisted

fibres of slaughtered animals; and in their girdles were stuck knives to dispatch their prey. Their looks were wild and ferocious, and their very smiles were savage.

Fattest of the herd! exclaimed the elder, thy craft shall not avail thee—to break into the covert, mingle with the deer, and leap upon the back of the buffalo! Subtle brute, thou diest ere I unbend my bow.—Came he not this way, Eziel?—Yes; behold him standing beside yon coppice, looking fearfully around.—Let fly! thou alone shalt provide venison for my wedding feast. The younger obeyed, and took aim; but the deer escaped, and the arrow disappeared in the thicket. A roar, loud, hoarse, and dreadful, shook the trees of the forest, the thicket was in motion, and from it sprang a young lion, with the weapon sticking in its shoulder: its eye-balls shot forth flames, and its voice and the lashing of its tail resembled thunder.

The younger, fixing an arrow, was

preparing to draw it to the barb, when the elder thrusting him back, cried aloud, Wilt thou rob me of the glory of my arm?—Unsheathing his knife, he stood ready to receive the wild beast on its point: the lion sprang upon him, and the weapon and the arm of the hunter were buried in its open throat, the slanting position of the blade preventing its jaws closing; then with his strong left arm, he plucked the arrow from the lion's shoulder, and the blood gushed vehemently after it. In vain the youthful beast attempted to use the terror of its paws, in vain it struggled to overpower the archer—human strength prevailed: weakened by the loss of blood which flowed outwardly, and stifled by that within, its roarings died away in low murmurs; it panted, howled, and fell beneath the weight of its victor, who, withdrawing his arm, plunged the knife into the valiant heart of the beast.

Glorious sport! he cried; let boys and timid slaves kill hares and roebucks

—give lions to the arm of Ishmael! And yet, Eziel, I could weep over this generous brute, thus slain in the pride of youth and strength. His paw hath touched my arm—I love to see my own blood! A chace without danger is murder, not conquest. I burn as if standing in the sun; I can endure thirst with the horned snake, but now, unless I quench my fire, it will consume me. He looked around, and on perceiving a limpid rill flow from the shady coverts, threw himself upon the grass, and quaffed its waters. Thou rugged monster! continued he, clapping the bleeding sides of the lion, which lay beside him; thy yellow skin shall make me a wedding-garment.

Eziel smiled, and asked him if he feared not the first sight of his unknown wife more than a thousand such encounters. Thy mother and thy father will surely return from Egypt this day, if, as the messenger whom they sent before them, said, they had already crossed the desert of Shur.—Wife! exclaimed

Ishmael—wife! How strange is the sound to my ear! I repent that ever I commanded my mother to wed me—would they were arrived. In my mind, this future helpmate appears swarthy and black, as are all those born under Egypt's burning sun. Eziel, the drawing of the longest arrow from my quiver, shall decide to which of us twain she shall be wedded.—O my mind is a whirlwind of joy, fear, doubt, and hope! I could at this moment, flee through forests, plains, and vallies, bound over rocks and mountains, and rush down falling cataracts: then, starting up, I will seek a bear, and kill him for his flesh; the roasted paws of a bear are a feast to thy father Nehazi.

Hark! said Eziel, dost thou not hear a gentle rustling in yonder covert? it is a beast, perchance brought hither by the scent of new-spilt blood. They went cautiously forward to recover their bows, and having fitted their darts to the string, aimed at the coppice, the branches of

which were shortly after put aside, and from between them slowly walked Amariah, the wandering mourner.

At sight of him, the archers dropped their arms, and stood gazing on the man of sorrow. Then, with loud laughter, the elder cried, We have dislodged a wondrous animal! is it a cameleon? Swell thyself out, for thou art now a set of living bones, a walking skin; dost live on flies? hast a hollow tongue?—Speak, said Eziel; who art thou, from whence come, and whither going? Amariah replied not, but was passing them, when Ishmael darting forward, roughly seized his arm, exclaiming, Stir not thy foot; thou art my captive, my bondman, my slave, as are all who touch these skirts of Paran. Move from this spot, and I will empty my quiver upon thee: rebel, and thou and this dead lion shall sleep together.

Do not struggle, added the younger, or tempt the wrath of this bowman; he hath quarrelled with Rhinoceros for digging the earth with his horn, visited Leviathan

dwelling in the northern brook, battled with the vulture for her eggs, and torn the sucking cub from the she-wolf. Attempt not to escape, or thou wilt be a mark for his arrows.

The soul of Amariah thus awakened from its lethargy, he answered, Let go your hold, young man, I pray you—you do not seek to kill me? why then detain the harmless traveller, and offer violence to him who never wronged you? Make war on brutes, not on men. To which Ishmael replied, Nimrod, God of the hunter, was not content to war on brutes alone, mankind became his prey, and I am fashioned after him. Dost wrestle with me? so doth the sorry bittern strike at the eyes of the pursuer, yet cannot she free herself.—Let go thy hold, I beseech thee, repeated Amariah; release me, or thou wilt force me to raise my voice, and call for succour.—The hunters laughed.

And who will hear thee? said the elder. Am I not the wild king of the woods, lord of the stony mountains to the south,

and ruler of the sullen desert? Am I not Ishmael, the fierce and roving hunter? The wilderness trembles at my nod, and at my bidding, each snarling beast of prey skulks into his den. This soil is mine; I have seized thee in my dominions, therefore art thou my prisoner. My tents are near at hand—my mother returns this day from Egypt—this is my wedding-day; and by the once dreadless heart of this lion, thou shalt be my guest. Venison thou shalt devour, and be drunk with the blood of the grape; and should I release thee, thou shalt be turned into a beast of burden; heavily laden shalt thou be with the delicate flesh of bucks, and leverets; laden with apples, dates, and honey, thou shalt, thou pale and starving wanderer.

The youthful archers seized the arm of Amariah, and with winged speed, and loud cries of barbarous rapture, hurried him over a desolate part of the mountain, until they reached a beauteous plain surrounded by thick groves of budding

trees. Here were scattered many tabernacles; but as half-finished Babel towers over the houses on the banks of Euphrates, so towered the tent of Ishmael above the rest.

Reumah, the wife of Nehazi the bowman, accompanied by her younger children, came forward at the sight of Ishmael, and these, with repeated cries of joy, announced to him the return of his mother Hagar from Egypt. They come, said Adah; they have quitted their camels, and crossed the river Sichor.—They are in view, exclaimed Nezdath; I behold glittering through the trees, the gold, and purple, and scarlet of their bright and waving garments. Between my father and a venerable man, whose beard is silver-white, walks the damsel who is to be thy wife. At these tidings a pang at once painful and rapturous, shot through the heart of Ishmael, and swift as the wild horse of the desert, he darted from them, and fled into the woods.

This unforeseen flight astonished Reumah, who remarked, that since his mother's departure, he had each day wearied them with impatient wishes for her return; and now demanded of Eziel wherefore Ishmael shunned her presence.

Ere he could reply, the travellers approached. Nehazi embraced his wife and children, and was welcomed by them with the fondest expressions of delight. Hagar wept as she returned their caresses, and long held her beloved Reumah to her breast; then, turning to the aged stranger, she addressed him, saying, Welcome, Cephren, priest of Phatures—welcome to the mountains of Paran: and thou, Azara, sweetest damsel, welcome to our land; here are thy tents, and these the friends of whom I spake to thee. At these words obeisance was made by Reumah, her children, and the servants, who had left the tents to gaze upon the strangers; they bowed themselves before the young Egyptian and her father, saying,

Welcome, holy man, and thou chosen wife to Ishmael our lord, welcome to Paran.

But where is my son, where is Ishmael? said Hagar; I looked for him to meet us on our way, and here, even among our tents, I see him not.—She spake, when suddenly Ishmael appeared, bending beneath the weight of the new-killed lion. With tottering steps he advanced, and when near the Egyptian maiden, flung at her feet the shaggy monster, yet grinning horrible in death. The damsel terrified at the noise of its fall, and ghastly appearance, faintly shrieked, and hid her pallid face on the bosom of Hagar.

All were amazed at this savage act of Ishmael, who thus thought to gain her love by displaying the vigour of his arm, and the boldness of his heart. Regardless of his mother, of Nehazi, or of the aged priest, he stood looking with stedfast wonder on Azara. Recovered

from her first fears, she slowly raised her head and turned her timid eyes on Ishmael, and when she saw his limbs and raiment stained with blood, and when she beheld the fierceness of his looks, her eyes again closed, and like a tender flower sinking beneath the hurricane of the north, she drooped on Cephren's shoulder. On witnessing this undisguised expression of terror and disgust, the looks of Ishmael became deadly to behold: he cast them around to mark on what his rising frenzy should spend itself, when jealousy (love's twin brother) pointed to his view the softer form of Eziel; but a kind glance from the youth disarmed his anger. Despair succeeded rage, and a tear of sorrow softened the fury of his countenance.

Again Azara lifted her head, and when, shining through wildness unparalleled, she discerned the majesty of his person and the marvellous beauty of his youthful face, she wondered, admired, and smiled: he caught her smile, and his

generous heart glowed with a joy until then unknown. Azara withdrew her eyes from his fixed gaze, and casting them on the ground, drooped her face and blushed, at which bright encrease of loveliness he loudly clapped his hands and shouted in rapture.

Ishmael, my son, said Hagar, embracing him, behold this honoured Egyptian, he is a priest of Isis, and of my kindred; I sojourned with him many weeks at his dwelling, which lies near Phatures, on the shores of the great sea, and at my voice he hath granted Azara his daughter, this beauteous virgin, to be thy wife: wherefore my son speak to him, give him the name of father, and bid him welcome to thy tents.

She spake, but the attention of Ishmael was not to be diverted from the young object of his admiration; the folds of her scarlet turban, which sparkled with various precious stones, concealing her hair, and part of her face from his view, he snatched it from her head, and

threw it on the ground: the dark and glossy ringlets, thus released, fell over her blushing cheeks and graceful shoulders, displaying the full beauty of her mild and comely features.

Again she looked upon him, and in her eye might be seen the soft and modest beam of young affection; at which sight, his transport could no longer be restrained: he rushed into the arms of his mother, and into those of Nehazi, and clasping their necks, exclaimed, whilst his voice trembled with emotion, O mother, blessed mother!—Nehazi, beloved father! what a gift ye have made me! This smiling rosy maid is all my soul desired. Then, starting from their embrace, he cried, But she hath not yet spoken. Addressing her in the Egyptian language, Speak, continued he—speak, that I may hear thy voice.

Azara turning to Hagar, kissed her, saying, Much loved mother!——Mother! repeated Ishmael—mother! If thou callest her mother, what then wilt thou

call me? Call me husband, and bid me bring thee the ivory tusks of an elephant, thou shalt have them. Tell me that the brilliant skin of a serpent pleases thee, the serpent shall not live. Say, Ishmael, change yon forest to a plain, and this plain into a forest, my hand shall do it. Of the soft leaves of the beech-tree shall thy bed be made, and with the starry tails of peacocks, and the bright-coloured feathers of the bird of paradise, shall thy tent be lined. To fan thee with the silver plumes of the ostrich, I will run the ostrich down. Each morning thou shalt bathe in camel's milk, and on the dainty flesh of the young camel shalt thou oft regale. Say to me, I would taste of the grapes, or the olives, or the dates of yon field, and though Nehazi frown, and though the owners of those fields send armies against me, thou shalt be obeyed; thou shalt have their delicious produce. Let the hands of those who dwell in cities be raised against me, yet shall the hand of roving Ishmael prevail.

O Ishmael, said Azara, what are all these things to me? thy smile is all I ask—thy smile, welcome as the sight of Sirius fortelling the approach of spring! —Ishmael heard, and in the fierceness of delight, clasped her to his bosom, and wept upon her shoulder. Hagar and Cephren advancing, joined their hands over the heads of their children. The blessing of God, said Hagar, the God of Adam, of Abel, and of Noah, be on ye, my beloved, and shield ye from harm, everlastingly. Osiris, son of Cham, exclaimed the priest, source of light, and author of all good, let thy beams play around these, and O may Typhon, thy pernicious enemy, never here exercise his malevolence!

And now, said Ishmael, speak to me again; say, Ishmael, I love thee. Azara, leaning forward, sweetly whispered, Ishmael, take away that bleeding lion. Rapid as the eagle, pouncing on a kid of the fold, the youth darted on the carcase, and bore it away in his arms. When he

was out of sight, Thy son, said Cephren, addressing Hagar, answers the description thou and Nehazi gave of him; his looks, his words, and manners, bespeak the nobleness of the hunter. He is tall, beautiful, and valiant; his deportment royal and commanding, and even his fierceness is becoming. I have not yet been able to catch his eye, but in loving my Azara, he honors me. His heart is most precious, said Nehazi, yet, like the mountain bezoar, he is unconscious of the gem he possesses within him.

But wherefore, said Reumah, stand we thus burning under the noon-tide sun? Hagar, our mistress, I pray you, lead the damsel and her father to the shade of yon hill, and there repose, whilst my daughters and I prepare the feast. Then, turning to Amariah, who had been a silent witness of all that passed, she said, Pardon, stranger, our seeming neglect, and go forward and join the Egyptians, for my son, Eziel, tells me, that Ishmael our lord hath invited

thee to his wedding: thou art most welcome. Tarry a moment, I pray thee, said Amariah, and inform me, is the young man whom ye call Ishmael, son to Abraham the Chaldean? she replied, and he pondered on her words, then walked slowly towards Hagar, by whom he was kindly received.

Ishmael having delivered the carcase of the lion to his servants, to be flayed and roasted, ran swiftly to a small lake, formed by the stream which flowed at the foot of the hill, near the summit of which, were pitched his tents:—but when he stooped to wash the blood from his limbs, he started back amazed, and lifting up his hands, exclaimed in transport—What is this! I no longer know mine own face!—those eyes, sparkling with rapture, are they mine? are those glowing cheeks, those scarlet lips, the lips and cheeks of Ishmael? how am I beautified! O she must love me thus! she does, she said it.—Would I could wash away these scars:—this on my forehead is not comely, though given me

by a bear, with whom I fought for a honeycomb; nor this on my leg, from the bite of the pard.—And that tigress, ere I could strangle her in my arms, to tear my shoulder thus!—I fear these wounds, though healed, will fright Azara —Azara! O how my soul fired when first I heard her name! Azara, was it?—sweetest name! then bursting into a loud cry of joy—Catch the enchanting sound ye hills, and send it back in a thousand echoes to my delighted senses! hear it ye winds of heaven, and go forth with the glad tidings that Azara is my own! let every feathered songster learn the name, and call its mate Azara!

He rushed to his tent, and having hastily thrown off the blood-stained hide, and clothed himself in that of a panther, he appeared before the company, unsullied, fresh, and blooming; in his hand he held a string of leopard's teeth, fairer and more bright than polished ivory, which, on seating himself beside Azara, he placed in her hand. She took his

gift, richer in her eyes than a braid of pearls, and smiling upon him, bound up her flowing hair, by winding the string around her temples. The gay and youthful Eziel, who beheld the transport of Ishmael with the joy of friendship, approached, and leaning over his shoulder, whispered, smiling archly—'Shall we draw for the longest arrow to decide to which of us twain she shall belong?'

The feast prepared, the delighted children of Nehazi spread it on the grass beneath the shade of almond, orange, and mulberry trees: brushing off the tender buds as they passed quickly to and fro, created mirth, and the treading on fallen balsams extracted odours which perfumed the air: and O how soft the love-song of the birds, who, in starting from bough to bough, showered blossoms on their heads!

Before them was now spread the much esteemed flesh of the broad-headed serpent devoid of venom, and that of the horse and camel's colt, to

which was added the smoking limbs of the young lion. The stolen eggs of ostriches, pelicans, herons, and cormorants, swelled the feast, which was increased by the productions of Egypt, brought from thence by Cephren: the fragrant flesh of the youthful crocodile, wafers anointed with oil, cakes of millet, lemons of Ethiopia, pulse, lentiles, cucumbers, and melons. From the wounds made in the trunk of the spring-cocoa, which grew near them, flowed white and invigorating fluids; and the shells of the calabash, after they had sucked the luscious pulp, and eaten the kernels, served them for vessels, out of which they drank the cooling milk of the cocoa, the sap of the palm-tree, and the exhilirating juice of the wild grape.

The countenances of those assembled expressed fulness of pleasure; the heart of each glowed with love to the other, and even the soul of Amariah for a time forgot its sorrows. Ishmael, whilst he watched the looks of Azara with fond

attention, laid before her such delicacies as he conceived would please. She preferred those of his country, whilst he, in honor of his love, ate only of the growth of Egypt. In the hope of drawing the notice of Ishmael to the princely Cephren, Azara requested him to present a plover's egg to her father, saying it was a dainty unknown in their land. Thy father! exclaimed Ishmael, turning and looking for the first time on the venerable priest; is this thy father? then embracing him with fervent affection, he added, O pardon me, my father, I had no eyes but for Azara.

The feast over, Amariah arose, and although Nehazi beseeched him to tarry, and Hagar and Reumah advised him to sleep that night in the tents, he replied, The day is far advanced, and I must return whence I came ere dusk. Peace be to ye, my friends, and may health and happiness dwell for ever in these tabernacles. He waved his hand for Ishmael to follow, and walked from the company:

the youth seizing an ozier basket, filled it hastily with divers sorts of provisions, and went with him a few paces. My friend, he said, unless thou takest these bridal presents at my hand, I will imprison thee in my arms, and thou shalt not stir from this wilderness ere morning.

Amariah smiled—Hear me, Ishmael, he said: know that I now return to thy father, and if thou hast aught to say to him, I will be thy messenger.—My father! cried Ishmael; Nehazi the hunter, is my father—yon holy prince is my father.—They are, replied Amariah; the one by adoption, the other by marriage: but hast thou forgotten him who gave thee birth, who carried thee in his bosom, and who, with fond solicitude, nursed thy helpless childhood?——Ishmael paused. And where is the weanling? he demanded; where is Isaac, the son of Sarah?—doth he live? I was told they dwelt at Beersheba; if so nigh, I must go hence, for if eagle meet eagle——The burning clove will suffer no plant near

its roots. Stranger, farewel!—pursue thy way.

Hast thou then no message to thy aged father Abraham, said Amariah—thy loving father Abraham?—Tears started into the eyes of Ishmael. O that beloved name! he cried; how fresh it recalls to my mind the happy days of childhood; and yet those sunny days were dark compared to the bliss I now enjoy. Clasping the neck of Amariah, he continued, Give my father Abraham my blessing, and impress upon his forehead this kiss. Then darting away, he returned, and retook his seat beside his lovely bride.

Amariah had journeyed far, ruminating as he walked, when he reached a gloomy valley through which rushed, at the opposite openings of the mountains, a strong current of wind. The departing sun shed a crimson light on the tops of the rocks composed of glittering crystal, breaking into abrupt precipices; and the branches of the tall pines playing majestically in the wind, sent forth mournful

sounds. His mind and body alike wearied, he threw himself on a bank beneath a budding sycamore, over which hung a stupendous mass of rock whose craggy summit was veiled in clouds.

What I have witnessed this day, he said, appears to me a dream, and I feel as one awakened from a deep sleep. This rejected Ishmael, whom his father cast out a helpless child, what is he become? A youth in full possession of strength, riches, dominion, beauty, and delight. I looked for my dead child to possess all these, and close as the seed of the cotton, I cherished her in my bosom, yet she died. These things are wonderful, and seem the work of a Power above that of man: a Power, who, as if looking at once upon the past, the present, and the future, says thus and thus shall it be. But who and what is this Power? Is it that which Abraham worships, and who said to him, 'Give thy son into my hand, and he shall prosper?' If so, his God has well fulfilled the promise. The royal cedar flourishes gloriously in the barren soil, so

has Ishmael flourished in the wilderness. Grief made me unmindful of the words of consolation spoken to me by Abraham, but they now float upon my thoughts like summer clouds upon the atmosphere. I will return, and seek him.—Said he not that the soul of my child still lived, and dwelt with God, whom he called Creator, Father, Protector? Did, then, the God of Abraham create this world and yonder firmament?—Am I the workmanship of his hands? But wherefore is he invisible? why not make himself known to his creatures, for unless we know and see, how can we love, praise, or thank him for our being and preservation? Abraham sought and found him in his works—I know not where to seek or find; my mind is dark and bewildered—I will think no more.

As he spake, loud piercing cries echoed through the valley, and on looking up, he beheld a flock of quails pursued by a vulture. The heart of Amariah was gentle and compassionate; wherefore

desirous of rescuing the timid fugitives from their foe, he left his seat, and seizing a stone, ran forward, and aimed it at the ravenous tyrant of the air. But the stone had scarcely quitted his hand, when a loud noise behind attracted his attention. The hanging rock, loosened by the rushing of the wind through the cleft, had fallen with a dreadful crash, and buried beneath its enormous weight, the sycamore and the bank on which Amariah had reposed.

He stood appalled: he looked upon the ruin, and lifted up his hands to heaven; dumb nature spake to his heart, and at the instant, it confessed the existence of a Providence. The sacred spark kindled in his soul by Abraham, now burst into a flame of full conviction; faith gave birth to gratitude, gratitude to love, love to adoration, and as he sank upon his knees, tears such as wet the cheek of the burning seraph, flowed down those of Amariah.

And now is come the solemn day when faith shall triumph, and obedience shew itself in man. O were the eyes of those that dwell in the land opened this day by the finger of the Almighty, they would behold a divine stream of radiance stretching from Beersheba to Mount Moriah. To witness the trial to which was put the soul of Abraham, the sons of God descended from their courts; their shapes ethereal and transparent, far outshone the blazing comet, and as they journey with the holy Patriarch, they leave a brilliant train of light behind them.

My father, said Isaac, are we still in the land of the Hittites?—No, my child, replied Abraham; the Jebusites inhabit the country we now are in. The village thou seest on yon green hill is Ephrath, and on the opposite ridge of mountains stands the royal city of Salem; behold the sun shines full upon its mighty towers. The people who dwell to our left, are the Philistines, whose possessions border on the great sea, and on our right,

lies the salt lake, where stood the five cities destroyed by fire from heaven.

But say, my father, said Isaac, what fragrance is this which has suddenly perfumed the air? these sweet odours exceed even those of our gardens.—The gale blows from the east, replied the Patriarch, then come they from Asasonthamar, the land of spice and balms; and, Isaac, dost thou behold a fire, even now kindled, on the summit of yon mountain? The labourers burn weeds, and thus clear the earth ere they sow new seed; but I marvel that the light is not eclipsed by the meridian rays of the sun. Isaac looked around, and then, in astonishment, replied, My father, the fire thou speakest of is in thine own eye, for none burns on the top of the mountain.

Abraham stopped, and turning to the two young men who followed with the ass, which was laden with fire, cleft wood, and provisions, said, pointing to Mount Moriah, Do ye not see yon bright and curling flames, which, with clouds of

smoke, ascend to heaven?—The servants lifted up their eyes, but saw no light save that of the sun. The summit thou pointest to, my lord, said they, appears to us fresh and verdant; it is covered with grass, and sprinkled with clumps of trees.

At these words, an exceeding great horror fell upon Abraham; he leaned upon the shoulders of the young men, saying, Give me drink—his voice trembled, and his face waxed pale. Isaac hastily lifted to his lips, a vessel of water, which, having tasted, strength returned to his limbs, and colour to his cheek.—My lord is weary with the length of a three days journey, said Merari; shall we unlade the beast, and carry the provisions, that thou mayest ride thereon, my lord? Abraham shook his head, and taking the hand of Isaac, walked on in silence, until they reached the mountain, the heights of which, to his sight alone, still burned with the awful presence of the Omnipotent.

And now, he said, we are come to the end of our journey.—Young men, turn ye the ass to graze, and abide here; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to ye.——Isaac; canst thou carry the wood, Isaac?—Yes, my father, replied the child; place it on my shoulder. Abraham took the vessel containing the fire in one hand, and in the other he held the knife. Whilst ascending the mountain, My father, said Isaac, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?—My son, answered the Patriarch, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.

When they reached the height, Abraham no more beheld the flames divine; the air was calm and pure, and the vernal grass glowed with freshness. The Patriarch laying down his burden, directed Isaac to do likewise, and assist him in collecting stones to build an altar. When raised three cubits from the ground, he unfastened the wood, and laid it in order thereon. This labour accomplished, he

took the cord which had tied the faggots, and holding the hands of Isaac in one of his, prepared to bind his tender limbs.

Filled with astonishment and terror, the child looked up to the face of his father, the solemn firmness of which chilled his heart; and now dismay and smiles alternately prevailed, when addressing Abraham, in a voice wherein affected cheerfulness endeavoured to cover his rising fears: My father, what is this? why dost thou bind my hands? I am not a lamb. Now indeed thy sight this day is dim; thou sawest fire where there was none, and thou takest me for a lamb, that am thy son Isaac. Why bindest thou my eyes with thy girdle? O father! dearest father! release me—why terrify me thus?—O my mother! where art thou?

My son, said Abraham, cast thyself on thy knees, and repeat the words I shall say to thee. Listen!—God, my Creator, thou hast required my life at the hands of my father, and I submit to thy com-

mand, by giving up to thee my body a willing sacrifice. Thou saidst to my soul, 'Live in the flesh,' and it lived; thou now sayest, 'Quit the flesh,' and lo! I obey. Ever be thy will fulfilled, and blessed be thy name, O Lord!

In a soft and trembling voice, the child repeated the first words, when his soul fainted, and he fell gently on the grass. Abraham stooped, and lifting him in his arms, placed him on the altar: he kissed his cold lips and pallid cheeks; he laid one hand upon the heart of Isaac, which now no longer throbbed, and in the other grasped the knife. O Lord! he cried, casting up his eyes, by this act I acknowledge the Creator is to be loved above the created, and the Giver above the gift: thou art to me a rock of strength, and had I children innumerable as the stars of heaven, each should bleed by my arm at thy command. Thou Supreme! all Bountiful! on whom my faith is fixed, receive the blood of my son.

He aimed the knife at the heart of

the child, when behold the army of angels which hovered like glowing orbs of fire, became visible; their celestial eyes, beaming love and admiration, were fixed on Abraham. Suddenly they looked upward, then fell back adoring, their glory eclipsed by a light, which, passing between their shining ranks, shot downwards, and played upon the altar.

'Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.'

Thus spake the Almighty. The hallowed light ascended, and blazed in the highest heaven a single point—a sun of sacred lustre! The seraphim spread their golden wings, and in songs of praise, glorified him whom the Lord had singled out from among the sons of men to endure a temptation wherein the agonies of the heart could not have been exceeded, and who had stood the test of faith in the promise, and obedience

to the will, by which he had ensured to himself blessings unchangeable.

The Patriarch cut the cord that bound the limbs of Isaac, and took the bandage from his eyes, when great was his wonder on beholding him sunk in sleep; his features bloomed with heat, he breathed sweet love and soft composure, and his body was steeped in balmy dews. He awoke, stretching his glowing arms to Abraham, on whom he smiled in tender languishment: a celestial radiance appeared in his opening eyes, as if caught from those of the angelic host, and the first expressions of his lips suited not the childishness of his age. My father, he said, and gently sighed—O would I could sleep for ever thus! Methought I was in a country filled with millions of shining angels; their wings were whiter than snow, and their garments seemed to be composed of golden sun-beams. I arose from the bed of brilliant flowers whereon I lay, and floating on the fragrant air, flew among the cherubim, embracing

and embraced by them. I then beheld a glory—O how far it outshone yonder sun! rays from which holy light darted around me. I felt them; they pierced my breast—my heart: I drank joy at every pore, and yet not content with partial enjoyment, I sprang upward, and shot into the divine lustre, where, like the phœnix, in its spicy nest, I died in flames with excess of bliss.

Sweet is the voice of the evening nightingale, but sweeter far was now the sound of the restored Isaac's voice to the ears of Abraham. The youthful mother hangs over her first-born son with tenderness and rapture, but the delight with which Abraham gazed upon his twice-born child exceeded the love of the fondest mother. He had dedicated him to the Lord, he had slain him in the spirit, and now received him as from the dead. He pressed him in his arms, he kissed his lips, and wept over him; and long had he embraced, and wept, and kissed, had he not been roused by a loud

bleating behind him. He lifted up his eyes, and beheld a ram caught in a thicket by its horns.

At this propitious sight, he breathed the purest thanksgivings to the gracious Eternal, then rose, and seizing the beast, by the help of Isaac, dragged it to the altar: the victim bled, and was laid on the wood; but as Abraham stretched forth his hand to set fire to the offering, he beheld a spark already kindled; flames burst out on all sides, and ascending to heaven, bore with them the fervent prayers, and grateful ejaculations of the prostrate Patriarch and his son.

And now again is heard the voice of the Lord renewing the covenant he had made with Abraham when he called him forth from Ur of Chaldea. 'In blessing, I will bless thee; and in multiplying, I will multiply thy offspring as the stars of the firmament, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore. In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.'

This is the mount of the Lord, said Abraham, rising; Jehovah-jireh be it called. He looked, and the sacrifice was consumed; he inhaled the air, and found it impregnated with celestial odours.

When the Patriarch arrived at the foot of Moriah, he went towards the spot where he had left the young men, whom, on approaching, he saw had been joined by two others. They still held the bridles of their horses, and were making enquiries of the servants concerning Abraham. The sight of Isaac, clearer than that of his father, immediately distinguished in one of these new-comers, Eliezer, the steward of the Patriarch's household, and he hastened forward to throw himself into the arms of his aged friend. Abraham discerned the other to be Amariah, whose hand he affectionately took, asking whither he was journeying. First receive the greetings of thy steward, replied Amariah, and then suffer me to reveal to thy ear what passes in my heart.

O my lord, exclaimed Eliezer, how great my joy at sight of thee and this young one!—Sarah, my mistress, since thy departure, has had a dream, which wrought in her a sudden and most fearful change, and if she behold not Isaac ere long, she will sicken even to death. In her sleep she saw an angel come and take up his abode with thee, for whose entertainment thou madest preparations. Thou wentest forth to slay, and returned with a tender lamb killed by thy arm; she looked upon its innocent face besmeared with blood, and imagined it was Ishmael, but on a closer view, she saw that it was Isaac. My mistress awoke in terror, and has not ceased lamenting the absence of her child, whom she fears danger has befallen; wherefore I left Beersheba in search of thee, accompanied by this kind stranger, who the same day arrived at our tents. Suffer me now, my lord, to return, and comfort thy wife with assurances of your safety.

It must not be, my friend, answered

Abraham: thou art aged, and must tarry with me; the necessity of speedily calming Sarah's mind requires a more youthful messenger than thou. Then turning to Merari, he added, mount Eliezer's horse, and depart without delay for Beersheba, with tidings of the welfare of myself and son. Speak unto thy mistress, saying, that under the guidance of Providence, within three days, she shall behold us return.

Abraham, remarking that his friends appeared spent with their journey, invited them to sit for a few minutes beside him, on a bank near the brook Kedron. They complied. Amariah gently drawing Isaac to his breast, kissed and placed him on his knee; the affectionate boy, folding his arm round Amariah's neck, returned his kiss, which caused the tear of regret to start in the eye of the childless Canaanite. Calmness resuming its seat in his heart, he related to Abraham by what miraculous means he had escaped death, adding, that though he felt the warmth

of gratitude, he was ignorant to whom it was due.

The mind of this man, said the Patriarch, ruminating, is good soil; the seeds I sowed have taken root, and O may my words, like the beams of a fostering sun, bring forth in blossoms his rising virtues. He then communicated to Amariah and Eliezer the command he had received from the Almighty, and the consequences of his submission. They marvelled exceedingly, and Eliezer having pondered some time on Sarah's dream, exclaimed, Well mayest thou, O Abraham! henceforth be called the father of the faithful, for great is indeed thy faith!—No, replied the Patriarch; I yield to God the title with which thou honorest me—He who, in his wisdom, gave the trial which proved my faith, and who strengthened my heart in the hour of temptation. Praised be his name, and let me his servant never think of what hath passed, but with becoming humility.

Eliezer wondered,—Three days! said

he. Did the Lord give you thus much time to examine his command, and did not the words of innocence, the looks of beauty, the company of this your child, turn you from your purpose? Three days!—no sudden fit of hasty piety raised your arm—yours indeed is one unvaried determined obedience to his will, whatsoever that may be.

And hath not tradition taught us that faith is the foundation of all things? demanded Abraham. If Adam had obeyed, he had not lost Paradise. Had Noah disobeyed, he must have perished in the waters. God said, 'I will drown the earth no more, and let my bow which I place in the heavens, be a token of the covenant between us.' Nimrod disbelieved the word, and by erecting the tower of Babel, called down his wrath. It was said to Lot, 'Depart, lest thou be consumed, and look not behind thee:' he departed, neither looked he to the right, nor to the left, and found security in Zoar—Not so his wife.

Amariah listened with attention, then

turning to Abraham—Thy words are to me precious as rain to the parched fields, or still winds to the traveller in the desert. My eyes begin to see his ways, and know the God of justice and of wisdom. Grief for my lost child vanishes from my heart, like mists before the sunbeam, and I feel within me that serenity which once was mine, and which methought was fled for ever.—Be first convinced, said Abraham, that the spirit dies not, and then think that thou now beholdest that of thy child: say to it, Descend, beloved; re-enter the flesh, and inherit my wealth, my land, my slaves, and flocks: return, and be the envy, the glory, the delight of Canaan. Thy daughter looks down from celestial felicity, when to her view, this hanging world, the stars, the moon, yon sun, what are they?—Atoms floating in the air! Mankind was not formed to adore any part the most excellent of the creation, for this earth was only made to be the seat of man's probation—the one will

perish, the other live everlastingly; and as certain as thunder attends lightning, God's love, which is the highest reward, follows man's obedience.

Amariah heard, and seized the hand of Abraham, on whom he looked expressive of the delight he was about to impart. Thou holy man, be thy words verified at the instant: Ishmael lives, I have beheld him.—Beheld! whom? demanded the Patriarch.—Thy son, thy Ishmael! replied Amariah. I quitted thee, and strayed among the mountains of Paran, where he rules supreme; his stature is princely, his limbs are strong and agile, and in his face, beautiful to look on, may be seen the excellent qualities of his heart. I partook of his wedding feast, and beheld him seated between the fair damsel who is become his wife, and his happy mother Hagar. I spake to him of thee; thy much-loved name brought tears into his eyes, and he sent thee his blessing in this kiss.

Abraham received the rapturous token

of Ishmael's love, and then sinking on his knees, whilst drops of tenderness flowed down his aged cheeks, he cried, Enough, enough!—my son, my first-born, my precious Ishmael lives! I knew he would live—I knew he would prosper, for thou, O Lord, didst promise it. O Amariah, I sent that child and his mother from my door with but three days' provision of water and of bread:—thou hast thyself beheld—say now, what doth this teach thee?—A truth, replied the Canaanite, never to be forgotten by me, that Him whom thou dost worship, is the only living God. I will go on now to Luz, and when I have spoken to my steward concerning the state of my long-neglected household, and of my lands, I will, with thy consent, most honored Abraham, return to thee at Beersheba, for thy conversation is sweeter to me than honey, and more healing to my wounded bosom than Egyptian balsam.

Be it so, my friend, answered Abraham, rising; but remember, Amariah

thou art no longer an unbeliever; henceforward adore with fear, and often ponder on my words. The error of the untaught idolater is more excusable in the eyes of the Lord, than the wilful defection of that man, who, having known, disowns him; it is not the blind he punishes, but those who, having once seen, shut from their sight his glory and omnipotence.

The soul of Amariah sparkled in his looks, when he exclaimed, in the fervency of devotion, The God of Abraham is now my only God! No more will I worship the brute, or the waters, or the forests; no more will I bow down before carved and molten images; my groves shall be consumed, my altars in high places thrown down, and my gilded idols trampled under foot.

But take heed, O Amariah! returned the Patriarch. Let the ardour of zeal be tempered with the mildness of true piety: use no violence to those who are still given to idolatry, for our right over the will of our neighbour in matters of belief,

extends no farther than admonition; thy reason hath been convinced, no force hath been used to change thy faith—use none to others: persecute not, but leave them to the wisdom of the Almighty, who will find his own means to enlighten them as he hath thee.—Fare thee well, Amariah: keep in mind that thy soul is given into thine own care, but that the preservation of thy body its Creator takes upon himself; and when thou seest wealth and honors heaped on the iniquitous, and the just given over to scorn and poverty, judge not by outward signs. The mild air gives birth to pestilence, and the whirlwind, though it uproots trees, destroys the devouring locust; the righteous Abel was slain in his youth, and Cain the murderer lived to behold his sons to the fourth generation. God blesses in a blow, and punishes in a gift;—to hasten the ripening of the fig, we pierce it, and what so sweet as the wounded pulp? And now, Amariah, we must part; but keep thy promise, my

beloved friend, and ere it be long repair to my tabernacles.

Amariah affectionately embraced the Patriarch, his son, and Eliezer, when they separated. The Canaanite proceeded northward towards Luz, and Abraham with Isaac and his servants, returned to Beersheba.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

PATRIARCHAL TIMES.

BOOK III.

ISAAC.

ARGUMENT.

The character of Zibeon the merchant, described—The shepherd Ashbel deserts his flock to attend his dying mother—Sheep-shearing—The misfortunes of Ashbel and his bethrothed Taphanes—The young pair restored to happiness by Rebekah—The journey of Eliezer, Abraham's steward, to chuse a wife for Isaac—Meets Rebekah at the well of Haran—Zarapha's instructions to her daughter, who departs with Eliezer—The sepulchre of Macpelah—Abraham's instructions to his son—Rebekah arrives in the land of Canaan.

WHOM doth all nature join in reproaching? The covetous and uncharitable man. To him the sun refuses not his beams, neither does the moon deny her light, the earth yields him her produce, and the gentle breezes of heaven disdain not to play around his head: yet his heart is

shut to compassion, and his ear deaf to the voice of sorrow; his nights are passed in reflecting on how he shall encrease his store, and his days are occupied in fulfilling the suggestions of the night. The waves of the southern gulf are less violent than the emotions of Zibeon's breast; and the eye of the cormorant, whilst hovering for prey over the surface of the waters, is less eager than that of this man, when, looking around, he watches on whom shall fall the shaft of distress or poverty; for out of distress he can gather riches, and even from poverty he knows the art of extracting self-advantage. Many of the ships which traded between Syria and Egypt were his, and most of the splendid buildings adorning the city of Haran, were raised by him; his herds and flocks are numerous; and at threescore years of age, his fame goes through the land as being one of the wealthiest merchants in Padan-aran.

Of those who had the care of his flocks, was a youth named Ashbel, whose

gentle heart was divided between an aged mother and a beauteous damsel to whom he had been bethrothed in childhood. Behold him surrounded by his fleecy charge, seated on the banks of a small rivulet which washes the walls of the city. His eyes are fixed on the stream, for his Taphanes is not with him, whilst his tender bosom filled with pious grief, laments in sighs the sickness of his parent.

On the wages I receive from Zibeon we all depend for support; I must not, therefore, resign or neglect my flocks, else I would never quit the bed of my mother; but she requires not my aid, when Taphanes is at her side. O sweet Taphanes! how is my love for thee increased by the kindness thou hast shewn my mother! and she will live to bless thy kindness, for when I left her at noon, I could perceive in her eye, and on her cheek, the glad signs of returning health.

He was silent, but in his mind retraced with delight every word, and look, and

action of his beloved. In fancy he beheld her watching, with angelic patience, the slumbers of the sick, administering reviving cordials prepared by her hand, and cheering the heart of the venerable matron by relating, with smiles, the harmless transactions that passed among the neighbours. And now his soul wandered to a blissful future when Taphanes should become his wife: he saw her seated at the door of his small cottage, the walls of which he had decorated with every graceful beauty—the creeping vine, the perfumed jessamine, the climbing aloe, and the ever-blooming rose of the east. On her breast lay a sleeping infant, which he stooped to caress ere he turned his steps to pen the flocks.

Cease thy waking dreams, O youthful visionary! recal thy soul from the enchanting heaven it hath created, and behold the female child who with speed comes into the field to seek thee. O Ashbel! Ashbel! cried the terrified Hezzai, haste to thy dwelling—thy mother

dies! Hasten thither, or her spirit will have fled ere thou canst receive her last kiss.

The youth started, and raising his head, looked wildly at the child, as doubtful of the truth: then rose, and with trembling steps ran swiftly homeward to be confirmed of his loss.—Thus were the timid flocks deserted by their shepherd.

Spring from your beds, ye blooming youths, and come forth arrayed in your gayest apparel! step from your tents, fair smiling damsels, and twine your shining locks with summer garlands! awaken your venerable fathers, and in the drowzy ears of your mothers, whisper, This is the shepherd's festival:—Awake, and hail this joyful day, held sacred by the guardians of flocks.

Leaving the hills of Haran, they drive their bleating treasures to the fields,

whither they annually repair to shear their sheep. Zarapha, the aged widow of Bethuel, leads the matrons, and her kinsman, Jasabed, the men in years: whilst Laban and Rebekah appear at the head of the youths and damsels. Arrived at the place where the harmless animals must submit to the hands of the shearers, the assembly stop, and the men proceed to wash them in the pools. Why strive ye to escape? why struggle under the grasp of the shepherd, ye panting innocents? this seeming violence, by depriving ye of a cumbrous load, will better prepare ye to meet the vertic heats, and what ye well can spare, will serve to comfort the limbs of your owners in the cold of winter.

Overcome by terror and surprise, the new-shorn sheep stand immoveable, until the children, at the command of Laban, mingle with them, and endeavour by every winning art to entice them to sport, that by means of exercise, their blood may recover its natural warmth:

no arduous task is this, and now are seen the flocks and children bounding over the fields, chasing each other through the trees, and rolling together on the grass: the hardy lads, conscious of defence being at hand, bestride the surly rams, whilst the little females wanton with the yeanlings. On the grass is spread a variety of meats and wines: the aged feast on these, but the young ones only slightly partake of them, their minds turning more to the song and to the dance. The sound of the harp and of the cymbal is heard: the singing voices warble sweetly in praise of the season, and every heart is lifted up rejoicing.

On a sudden Rebekah ceased the hymn of gladness, and cast her eyes from face to face, then turning to Laban, remarked that two of their friends were absent—Say, my brother, where is Ashbel and his Taphanes? I marvel they are not here, for at the festivals held in the times of harvest, vintage, and sheep-shearing, Ashbel and Taphanes were ever

the foremost. Laban knew not the cause of their absence, neither did any one present, excepting Hezzai, who, on hearing the enquiry made by Rebekah, waved her hand for the damsel to follow her. When seated, a short distance from their companions, she told to Rebekah's ear the tale of truth and simplicity.

Ashbel returned from the field only in time to receive the last blessing of his mother. Overwhelmed with grief, and deprived of the power of thought, it was not until she was placed in the sepulchre, that the afflicted shepherd recollected having abandoned the flocks of Zibeon: some of these, on search being made for them, were found nearly suffocated in the ponds, with which the fields abounded, others were entangled in the deep marshes, and many had strayed into the desert. On these fatal tidings coming to the ears of Zibeon, swift as the vulture, when cutting the air to dip its feathered ruff in the blood of the slaughtered victim, he darted out of

the gate of the city, and coming unto the mourning Ashbel, said, That if the flock were not restored to him, without the loss of a single lamb, ere the sun went down, he would seize upon his field and cottage.

This he hath already done, and look, Rebekah, continued the child, cast thine eyes to the bank of yonder stream, where the kine stand in the water, dost thou behold one walking to and fro? is it not Ashbel? how melancholy he appears! how dejected his looks!—Rebekah wiped the tears from her cheek, and said, Do thou, my sweetest child, return to thy companions, whilst I, unseen by them, go forward and strive to comfort the forlorn shepherd.

Ashbel had searched the summits, dales, and woods to find the silly wanderers; he had even penetrated far into the wilderness; and now, after twelve hours seeking them, was returning to console his Taphanes, when the sound of music, and the voice of mirth caught his

ear, and the sight of the flocks delayed his steps. Approaching the new-shorn sheep that had strayed among the trees which hid him from the view of the happy ones, he threw himself on the ground, and clasping his arms around their necks, caressed, and stroked, and kissed them, lamenting that this was not the flock he sought. On Rebekah's approach, he looked up, and recollecting the many losses he had suffered since he last beheld her, he burst into tears.

Ashbel, said Rebekah, in a voice of cheerfulness, O thou careless youth, where hast thou been? our sheep are sheared. Where is thy festive garment, thy white and unspotted coat, and the wreath of flowers that was wont, on such occasions, to adorn thy curling hair, and where is the streaked hazle rod with which last summer thou drovest thy flock from Haran to these fields? The young men smile at thy absence, as if not much displeased, but the maidens say, Where is the gay, the comely shepherd Ashbel, in

whose voice is melody, and whose fingers draw such sounds of sweetness from the lyre?—O Rebekah! replied the youth, I must no more chuse the colour of my raiment; henceforth I must wander barefooted through the land; my lyre is cast aside, my garlands are drowned in the pool, nor need I now a hazle rod to drive my flocks—I have no flocks: my cottage and my field were all I had, and these are taken from me. My mother is dead, and perhaps I must leave, for ever leave my dear Taphanes.

Willing to hear his misfortunes from his own lips, Rebekah, by affecting surprise, gained her wish, and he related the events she had before heard from the child. When he concluded, the damsel remained some time silent; I will be thy friend, at length she said; I will be thy mediator with this Zibeon. Were I to go to him, dost thou not think he would, at my request, give back to thee that he hath taken?

O my kind Rebekah, answered Ashbel,

thou knowest not the man ; bitter as the stone of the tamarind are his words, and more piercing than Satan's thorn are the beams of his eye to the breast of a suppli-cant. He hath been to me a cruel and unfeeling master, and yet reproach is not his due, for he is injured by the loss of the flock ; but had he left me my inherit-ance, I would have laboured to repay him. I that am so skilful in pasturage, and the knowledge of wells ! (there is not a well throughout the land but I know its depth, and the quality of its waters,) and how tender am I of my sheep ! They loved me, and knew the sound of my voice ; I doubt not they mourn my loss as bitterly as I mourn theirs.

Hear me, Ashbel, said Rebekah ; I yet have another offer to make thee which lies with thyself either to hearken to or reject ; but whatever thou art inclined to follow, I will be still thy friend—if thou refusest, a life of servitude can alone rescue thee from the miseries of poverty, now thy lot; but if thou wilt listen to my

words, thou mayest, ere the sun rise twice, be in possession of a goodly dwelling, a spacious field covered with bearing trees, a flock of sheep, a herd of goats, four asses and their colts, three hives of bees, and wool sufficient to supply thee with cloathing many years. Ashbel wondered, and asked, How can this be? then, gathering from her looks that it were possible, a gleam of hope and joy enlightened every feature, and he pressed her to explain her meaning.

She smiled, and answered—I have a companion whom thou hast seen, and whom I love most tenderly:—the maid is of graceful stature, her features fair and delicate, and her mind (for I know it) is pure as morning dew. In years though young as spring, yet have her eyes never wandered from face to face, but often inclining to mine her blushing cheek, she has whispered—If I ever wed, O may I wed the shepherd Ashbel! Speak then, my friend, wilt thou, through me, solicit the hand of this virgin? she will

require no other riches than a heart filled with love; by this union she will be blessed with the husband of her choice, and thou be master of the wealth I have named to thee.

Ashbel, whose breast swelled with emotion, rose from the bank; his first words were hasty expressions of anger, but recollecting that Rebekah's motive could be only a wish to serve him, and that it was unbecoming to shew indignation to a female, he suppress his agitation, and replied, I thank thee, Rebekah—No; thou knowest not the heart of Ashbel, if thou thinkest it can forget its Taphanes. All the jewels of Babylon, the riches of Zibeon, nay, the flocks of Mesopotamia, would appear worthless to me when compared to my betrothed. Her father died ere she was born, and her mother, at her death, gave her in charge to mine. O hadst thou seen with what anxious fondness she administered to my mother's wants, and nursed her long and painful illness, thou wouldest not, Rebe-

kah, thou wouldest not ask me to forsake Taphanes. Unkind Rebekah! she was also thy companion, and thou knewest of our affection—thou hast surprised me by this offer. Why wrong my constancy? Can love change its object?—Never. But thou hast never loved. First love (and first love alone) is beautified by the rosy bloom of novelty and innocence, and the pure charms of modesty and restraint. That bloom gone can never be replaced. Subsequent love, if love it can be called, (as the acceptance of thy offer would confirm) is ever the consequence of interest or convenience.—Ere my mother died, she joined the hand of Taphanes and mine, solemnly charging me not to await until the days of mourning for herself were past, but without delay to become the husband of the forlorn and unprotected Taphanes. If it be the will of the Most High, our hands will soon be united never to be separated; if not, I can also stray away, seek my lost sheep, and die

with them. He sighed, and left Rebekah, who, on losing sight of him, gave way to the emotions of her breast in a flood of tears. Thus was she found by the shearers, who were now bending their steps homeward. The aged smiled on her as they passed, and Laban and her youthful friends intreated her to acquaint them with what had taken place between Ashbel and herself.

Has the negligent lad recovered the flock which in his folly he suffered to stray? said Zibeon to his overseer. No, my lord, replied the man; but if thou wilt abide by my words, thou wilt not do this thing: thou dost not know perhaps that yon dwelling and this field are thrice the value of the lost flock, and the chief men of Haran will not let injustice pass unnoticed.—The weight of their reproaches, replied Zibeon, will be overbalanced by the price I am to receive for these, from my neighbour Gershon. A

stream of the river runs through this land, which, as it adjoins that of Gershon, will be of more importance to him than to another, and he will gladly give me much for it. Go and say I would speak with him, if his leisure permit. The overseer listened in silence, and although his feet obeyed, his heart murmured.

When alone, Zibeon walked to and fro, calculating the advantages he was likely to reap from the loss of his sheep, when hearing voices behind, he turned, and beheld two women approaching, whom he knew to be Rebekah and Deborah her nurse. As Laban, the brother of the damsel, was one of the wealthiest shepherds between Tygris and Euphrates, Zibeon regarded her with reverence, and as he went forward to meet her, bowed himself to the ground.

Deborah spake, and explained Rebekah's motive for seeking him. And now, Zibeon, said the maiden, that thou hast deigned to listen to my proposal,

say, wilt thou accept it? wilt thou sell me the land and cottage which I understand have this day fallen into thy possession? Although the terms she had proposed in the warmth of youth and inexperience, exceeded in value those of Gershon, and though Zibeon was resolved on accepting them, he appeared to be unwilling; wherefore he replied, This cannot be hastily decided. I must ponder on thy words; but if thou wilt come to me to-morrow, at the tenth hour, I will answer thee.

On perceiving Rebekah's reluctance to delay, he continued, No, no, I am not as thou art, young, and eager, and led by the wish of the moment: I must consider on the bargain; for though thou art much famed for prudence, yet art thou also accused of many doings which contradict the rumour. I grant thee to be the protector of those who need protection, but why give shelter to all the wanderers that infest the country? Thou dost often watch the bed of age and sick-

ness, but why not select objects worthy of charity, and why do servile offices for those who are able to serve themselves? Thy kindness is extended beyond the bounds of reason, and thou dost encourage idleness and folly.

The heart of Rebekah swelled with virtuous pride at this ill-founded accusation, and repenting that she had stooped to commune with the man, she turned from him with the dignity of insulted purity; when he, fearful of losing his gains, detained her, saying, Why this scorn, fair damsel? Thou hast misunderstood me if my speech hath angered thee. I spake as my age authorizes to a maiden like thyself, wholly ignorant of worldly dealings; I would have warned thy youth against the hypocrisy of the wicked; not have offended thee. Say then, should I accept thy offer, I lose thereby, for my neighbour Gershon hath promised me, besides the sum thou hast named, two milch-camels.

Then was the righteous indignation of Rebekah kindled high, and the reproaches of her heart could no longer be suppressed. O thou unjust, thou cruel Zibeon! thou covetous, thou merciless man! behold thou hast deprived Ashbel of this his patrimony for a flock of sheep, and now thou wilt sell it for two milch-camels, and fifty pieces of silver!—thou defrauder of the poor! thou tormenter of the distressed! thou usurer! When I tell this unto my mother, it will spread abroad a testimony against thee.—Sweet disdainful virgin! exclaimed Zibeon, smiling, how little knowest thou the ways of traffic! Dost thou think that we merchants of Haran but exchange in equal value a horse for a horse, a hin of oil for a hin of oil? that we give a handful, and receive a handful? where then would be thrift and increase? Thou accusest me of usury, yet of this so heinous crime thy mother Zarapha is also accused.

The sun, replied Rebekah, draws up the vapours from the earth, and suspends

them in air, until the time when most required, they fall in refreshing dews, and fertilizing showers; so doth my mother receive with gladness whatever wages the hirelings around wish to deposit in her hands, and when by age, accident, or marriage, they require them back, they know where to find that, which, had they not thus disposed of, might by ill use, have turned to their evil. And here comes my brother Laban, he will satisfy thee of this truth, and wipe the slander from Zarapha's name.

Where, where is the silver? demanded Zibeon; give it—I agree to thy bargain; the house and land are thine—if thou requirest surety, send to me in Haran. Is the money counted? but I trust to thee thou fair and virtuous damsel. He took the bag of silver from Deborah, and the nearer Laban drew, the faster was his speed in departing.

When the young man approached, he informed Rebekah that he had sent their

herdsmen to seek the strayed flock of Ashbel; upon which she acquainted him with what had passed between Zibeon and herself.

Whilst he commended her zealous friendship and kind intentions, he blamed her for making the purchase unknown to himself or their mother. I would have tendered him half the money, said Laban, or rather have forced him to take a flock at my hand, in place of that lost; but he shall restore the sum of which he hath defrauded thee. This design Rebekah opposed, and having, with many entreaties, as they walked homeward, dissuaded him from it, she hastened to join her young companions, who waited for her in an adjoining grove.

As when two cygnets, having lost the tender bird which gave them birth by the cruelty of the ensnarer, nestle lovingly side by side, and hide among the reeds of

sedgy Tygris, trembling at every breeze, and shrinking from every little wave that rolls towards them, so on the flowery banks of Scirtas sat the sorrowing Ashbel and his beloved Taphanes. They had often bade farewell, and as often found something left unsaid; oft had they parted, and still returned under trifling pretences, to part again.

In the gentlest accents, he reproached her for not having fixed her future abode near his. I will not, cannot remain at Haran when thou art gone? said Ashbel. Had I only caught a distant sight of thee each day, it would have been some consolation.—Nay, my Ashbel, replied the maiden, by thus doing, I sought to encrease our love; the joys of meeting after absence, far exceed those of being ever together; and how can we taste these unless we part? Reconcile thy mind to this necessity; we must part, otherwise our respective duties will be neglected.

She then entreated him to remain at Haran, and be careful of the new charge

given him that morning by a humane shepherd, on hearing of his misfortunes, whilst she strove to gain the affection of the ancient matron she had bound herself to serve, and who dwelt in the city of Calneh, promising, that when by industry and frugality, they were enabled to purchase an habitation and a small flock, she would unite with him, and may that union, sanctioned by thy dear departed mother, last till death!

The melancholy youth appeared softened and consoled by her reasons, and when she cautioned him to remember the engagement he had made concerning Zibeon, he replied, he would ever keep it sacred; that though he could not ask heaven to prosper the man, for all his wealth sprang from iniquity, yet he would in prayer invoke the Lord to turn his heart; fervently adding, I forgive him—be witness, O Most High, that my soul pardons Zibeon!

Taphanes, perceiving that the shadows began to lengthen, rose from the

bank, saying, It is time to separate; when Ashbel, for a moment forgetting all the past, asked with surprise, whither she was going? She looked down upon him faintly smiling: he grasped her garment in both his hands—his cheeks were covered with tears. O Taphanes! he cried, the shepherds of Calneh are rich, and comely, and graceful.

They may be, replied the maiden, and so are many of the shepherds of Haran; but do I not look upon them as I would on a grove of fair cedars, or on a border of flowers? Flowers and trees are the young men of this land in my eyes, ignorant as I am that any other youth exists but only thee. Though leagues asunder, thy beloved form will be nearer to me each day than the forms I shall each hour behold, for there lives but one Ashbel.—My dearest Ashbel, why this fresh burst of sorrow? must I teach thee fortitude? Arise, and since thou hast thought it necessary to warn me against a change, remember; (and

she smiled, as conscious that the warning was unnecessary) remember that my life depends on thy constancy.

Taking his hand, she continued, But above all, let our griefs be still sacred, let them still remain concealed deep in our own bosoms, for scorn ever attends the voice of complaint—be patient, obedient, and industrious: thou hast already proved thy faith in rejecting Rebekah's unfriendly offer; let it stand that hardest test, the test of absence, perchance an absence of many years, and a day may come when we shall say, 'Affliction has been to us a blessing.'

Turning her pensive looks on the youth, she trembled on perceiving the anguish of his soul; she saw that the separation became more painful the longer it was delayed, and was leaning forward to take a last, an affectionate farewell, when a shape airy as the down of thistle, and lovely as the opening eye of the violet, sprang from an adjacent coppice, and rushing between them, re-

ceived the parting embrace which Taphanes designed for her betrothed.

Unkind Taphanes! said Rebekah, sobbing on her breast, why hast thou been to me an ungrateful friend? though thy lips never spake thy sorrows, I know them all. Look up, and see who accompany me; nay, marvel not—their love equals mine, as their tokens of esteem will prove. Then, added she, smiling, come forth, ye blooming damsels, and ye, fair dimpled youths who in the sight of Taphanes, are no more than trees and flowers—come forth! The young men and virgins stept forward at Rebekah's call, from their several hiding places, and having saluted the gentle pair with marks of respect and tenderness, they each presented a gift proportioned to their means.

Within the ring were assembled ewes, and rams, and yeanlings, goats, kids, and various other animals; and now was seen bursting through the crowd, the child Hezzai. She approached

Taphanes, and holding up a small basket made of bulrushes, covered carefully with feathers, exclaimed, All my wealth consists in these little turtle doves—take them, Taphanes, take them at my hand, and thou wilt see that next spring they also will have young ones.

The maiden, overcome with emotions of delight and gratitude, took the basket, and kneeling on one knee, passed her arm round the waist of the child, and kissed her burning cheek.

My own Taphanes! said Rebekah, hear me, for it is to thee I address myself. I have purchased the land and cottage which this morning came into the possession of Zibeon; they are now thine, and O mayest thou dwell therein, blest with unfading happiness! These gifts are also thine—all thou beholdest is thine. When thou enterest thy new abode, thou wilt find the stores that were there during the life of its late possessor encreased, not diminished. In addition, there are six ephas of corn, and six of

flour; three hives of bees, much fodder, and also fuel; likewise the wool which was cut from this flock at our last shearing, for it is not just that we should rob them of their treasure, and send them to thee naked. But, my Taphanes, thou must seek another heart, for the heart of Ashbel, thy first love, is no longer thine; he rejects thee—at my hands, and to my face, he has rejected thee.

The pale and fainting Taphanes, knowing that the charge was unfounded, grasped the trembling arm of her Ashbel, and with sickening aversion, turned her sight from the company and its gifts; when Rebekah continued, addressing the astonished youth, Is not this most certain? Said I not I knew a damsel young as the spring, of comely stature, with mind pure as morning dew, and face lovely as the snow-drop reflecting the blushes of morn—possessed of such wealth as this, and who had oft times, inclining to mine her glowing cheek, whispered, 'If ere I wed, O may I wed

the shepherd Ashbel ?' Then taking the hand of Taphanes, Behold the maid that said these words. Is she not young and fair, rich and virtuous, and does she not love thee ? Wilt thou still reject her at my hands ? Canst thou refuse thy first, thy only love, 'beautified by the rosy bloom of modesty and innocence ?'

The transported Ashbel clasped his Taphanes to his grateful breast, and they fell at the feet of Rebekah, who, unable to witness the excess of their gratitude, turned away, and leaning upon the shoulder of a maiden, wept with her the tears of joy.

Laban now joined them, saying, I come at the command of my mother, who desires, that when the usual circle of thanks and blessings is compleated, ye would repair to her house, for she designs to witness the marriage of Taphanes and Ashbel ere night, and has prepared a feast, to which all our neighbours are already bidden. Say then, are ye inclined to follow me, or is it yet too soon to disturb

the ceremony of tears and sighs. They smiled one upon another, but moved not, until Laban, taking the hand of Ashbel and that of Taphanes, drew them beneath his arm, and walked on, saying they may tarry who are not inclined to share in the bridal feast.

At the door of the dwelling, the youthful assembly was met by Zarapha and her aged brother, who affectionately embraced the betrothed pair. Pride, though praise-worthy in some instances, said Zarapha, addressing them, may in others be extended to excess. Why did ye not come to me, and make known your sorrows? When did I ever turn from the voice of complaint, or the prayer of affliction? Wherefore hath the Lord given me wealth, but to redress the first, and relieve the latter? O may I never be accused of neglecting my trust! Nay, my children, your silence was not kind. They felt the just, the generous rebuke, and hung down their blushing faces. And yet, continued Zarapha, communing with her thoughts, such is

the contradiction of our frail nature, that we more readily admire, and are even more eager to assist those who suffer in silence, than those who cry for help; it is the spirit of independence which these young ones have shown in resolving to part for years, and bind themselves to servitude, rather than solicit relief, that hath endeared them to my heart.

She then acquainted Ashbel, that many of the strayed sheep were found, that those thought to be dying had recovered, and that what remained was now his; for that as Zibeon had been paid for the land and dwelling he had unjustly seized, he no longer had any claim to the flock. To which Laban added, Zibeon suffers on every side, and most justly, for Gershon hath punished him by fine, for breach of compact in disposing of that to my sister which he had agreed to sell to him.

The fields were now filled with those invited to the wedding, and the gates of the city poured forth the young inhabit-

ants who came to join in the festivities of the evening. Every eye gazed with anxious fondness on the loving pair, and every voice was lifted up in praise of Rebekah, who had thus been the means of rewarding the virtues of two affectionate hearts.

Ashbel, on being commanded by the holy priest to take the hand of Taphanes, exclaimed, in the rapture of his soul, O may all here be blest as they have blessed us! and may Rebekah find a heart loving as her own!

The rites performed, Laban and his blooming sister advanced with the bridal chaplets; Rebekah adorned the head of Ashbel with a myrtle wreath bearing blossoms, whilst Laban crowned Taphanes with a garland of roses. Ashbel, folding his bride in his arms, (so clings the mace around the spicy nut,) tenderly whispered, My love, thy words are come to pass—'Affliction has been to us a blessing.'

On the slope of a chalky mountain, the heights of which command a view of the distant country from the banks of the Euphrates and the plains of Babel, even to those of Resen, are seated three travellers, who, whilst they refresh their limbs and spirits by rest and food, examine and point out to each other, with unbounded pleasure, the various beauties presented to their view.

In some places the earth covered with the luxuriant green of summer, and in others enlivened with a rich variety of scarlet, purple, and crimson heaths, or with the dazzling blue of mountain flax. The unclouded firmament glows a bright azure, whilst every object around is gilded by the fervid rays of the meridian sun. And now a herd of antelopes attracts the traveller's eye, and next a flock of stately ostriches; the deep voice of the elephant ascends from the forest beneath, which is answered by a voice as deep from a neighbouring forest; and from the dark coverts start numerous par-

tridges, and timid pheasants, to feed on the green corn, or the uncultured barley, which hath sprouted in different parts of the unfrequented slopes.

Thus long had the strangers sat, listening to the wood-lark above their heads, and breathing the odours drawn by the sun from the Egyptian thorn, the wild wormwood, blossoming thyme, and fragrant mint—when Eliezer of Damascus the chief of them, addressing a goatherd who passed driving his charge to the heights, said, Peace be to thee my friend: say, I pray thee, how far from hence is it to Haran?

The herdsman stopped, and leaning on his staff, pointed to the hill whereon the city rose. Approach the brink, and I will shew thee the track thou must pursue: dost thou behold yon walls? they are those of Haran which lies as thou seest at the head of the river Scirtas; but thou canst not reach it ere evening for the road winds much, and thou hast yet another river to pass. Look downward:

that which appears from this eminence a narrow rill, is broad and deep, but thou wilt meet with fishermen who will take thee to the opposite banks, and then thou art not distant from Haran: by being a stranger to the situation of the city, I judge thou art come from beyond the Euphrates.

Without waiting for Eliezer's reply, he left him to go among his herd, and shortly returned with a large cocoa-nut filled with the warm milk of the goats. Eliezer accepted his kindness and drank, as did his servants; the herdsman then blessed their steps and was continuing his way, when the steward detained him, saying, Receive also from me a gift—though of small value, it is offered with a grateful heart, and presented him a package of dried and preserved fruits, which from the novelty of their form and flavour, gave pleasure to the simple goatherd. The camels who had wandered down the slope seeking truffles and browsing on rosemary and other scented

bushes, now returned from all sides in full speed, obedient to the signal given by their owners—and Eliezer and his attendants pursued their journey.

Arrived at the opposite banks of the Erech, which they crossed in the same manner as they had passed the Euphrates, in wicker boats lined with the hide of the buffalo, the men again filled their water-skins borne by the camels, and rode on at Eliezer's desire, he lingering behind to enjoy in delicious solitude, the raptures created by the prospect which improved upon the view at every step.

And am I in the land of my master Abraham's nativity? he said; and do I then breathe the air he first breathed? luxuriant land! sweet balmy air! Here I behold with captivating wonder, the produce of every season blended—here the bursting leaves and tender green of spring is mingled with the dark and richer tints of summer—whilst the bounteous trees, loaded with golden fruit, in-

vite the hand to pluck—the only appearance of winter arising from the fall of waters rushing down the craggy rocks, their heights crowned with sparkling snows. O beauteous Padan-aran! seat of our father Adam—thou art still a paradise—but instead of one, thou canst now boast a thousand blissful Edens.

Slowly casting his eyes around, he fixed them on a far distant object which seemed to strike a sudden awe over his mind.—Do I then behold, he cried, in yonder building, lifting its giant head as if to prop the skies, the Tower erected by sinful men, vainly seeking to escape a second vengeance of the offended Lord? There stand, a stupendous warning to future generations! and may such as thine O Babel, be the fate of the transgressor! may the designs of his heart never be accomplished, may confusion attend on all his deeds, and the congregation of the wicked be scattered abroad! no, the only tower by which we can hope to escape destruction, and

attain heaven, is a low and humble heart filled with faith to God, and love to man.

Thus meditating, Eliezer came at length within sight of his companions, who were seated beside a well in a field without the walls of Haran. And now, my friends, he said, we are arrived at the end of our journey: let not the camels stray, but repose yourselves, for we will tarry here a little while ere we enter the city.

He dismounted, and giving his beast in charge to one of the men, seated himself at some distance, pondering on the object of his journey. His breast, filled with zealous love to Abraham, (who had sent him to Padan-aran to choose a wife for Isaac from among the daughters of the house of Nahor his brother,) was an alternate prey to hope and fear.

Should my judgment err, or my sight be led astray—O God of my master Abraham, on thee I call! shew kindness unto him, and send me good speed this

day. I am no searcher of hearts, nor can I pluck truth from the disguised mind!—my eyes, though aged, can distinguish the well-favoured from the uncomely, and my ears can know a youthful voice; but thou alone canst tell whether beauty hides the unblown seeds of vice, or whether it be a type of inward loveliness. Let it then come to pass, when the daughters of this land, whom I now behold repairing to this well, as may be the custom at even-tide, shall be here, that the damsel who, at my request for water, shall answer, 'Drink, and I will draw for thy camels also,' be the same thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac. By this sign I shall know thou hast shewed kindness to my master Abraham.

The gates of Haran open; a lovely group of damsels are seen winding down the hill, who, when reached the plain, join Rebekah and others coming from the houses without the walls. With steps light as the waving boughs of the

fir, they enter the field, and approach the well, near which are the travellers. Their innocent mirth is now encreased by a struggle to retain their long loose veils, which the jocund winds strive to snatch away.

A drove of playful deer revel over a mossy green in unbounded sport, until distinguishing through the branches of the trees, a human face watching their graceful motions, they stop and gaze on the intruder with doubt and timid irresolution: thus stood the maidens on the first sight of the strangers; their lips no longer carolled forth the song of joy—no longer did they wrestle with the wind—a decent gravity appeared in their eyes, whilst each striving to escape the wondering looks of the men, endeavoured to glide behind her companion. Rebekah, recovered from her youthful fears, advanced towards the well; the others encouraged by her example, also descended, and having filled their pitchers, were returning towards the city, when Eliezer

rose and approached them. He examined the faces of all, but the sweet simplicity of Rebekah's eyes, which were now raised to his, penetrated his soul; her cheek, half shaden by her snow-white veil, displayed a bloom now deepened to a glowing carnation, and now faded to the palest tinge of the virgin-rose.

Some of her companions overwhelmed with excess of bashfulness, withdrew behind the trees, and others, with that disdainful negligence or arrogance with which many regard those who are not natives of their land, returned to their homes; but Rebekah, arrayed in her own maiden purity, stood with complacent attention, waiting to hear the request which the aged stranger made, with doubt and hesitation. Let me, I pray thee, he said, drink a little water from thy pitcher.

Her cheek blushed a lively crimson, and with sparkling looks expressive of the gladness she felt on being able to serve him, she hasted and let down the

vessel on her hand, saying, Drink, my lord — he obeyed; — and I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. This the two men who accompanied the steward would have prevented; saying, Shall we stand idle, and see a damsel do this service? but Eliezer, by the motion of his hand, forbade them; and whilst she oft went down to the well, and brought up water until the trough was full, and whilst she led his camels to drink, he stood watching her in silent admiration. The beasts having satisfied their thirst, folded their legs under them, and lay down on the grass, chewing the cud, pleased, and grateful for the caresses of Rebekah, who, with gentle hand, stroked and patted their sides and necks.

The delightful emotions of Eliezer's breast were suddenly embittered by the reflection that this might be an heathen, and a tear of sensibility flowed down his furrowed cheek, when approaching her, he said, with fearful anxiety, Tell me,

most gracious maiden, whose daughter art thou; and say, I pray thee, is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge? To which Rebekah answered eagerly, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bare unto Nahor: my father has long been dead, but my mother lives; and I have a brother named Laban. We have both straw, and provender, and room to lodge in; come then, therefore, with me, thou, and thy men, and thy camels.

Eliezer listened, and when she ceased speaking, he fell on his knees in excess of joy, and raising his clasped hands and eyes to heaven, he exclaimed with fervent thankfulness, Blessed be the God of Abraham, who hath not left him destitute of his mercy and truth! my journey is crowned with blessings; thus hath the Lord led my steps to the house of my master's brethren.

He rose, and going over to the camels, took from their lading a small case of sandal wood containing many precious

things, from which he selected golden bracelets, and ear-rings also of gold, of curious workmanship. He approached the damsel, who, unconscious of his motive, suffered him to decorate her with the costly ornaments; but astonished at their value, she gazed alternately with the eye of enquiry on Eliezer and on the bracelets which encircled her beauteous arms; and now the ear-rings he had placed in her hand, attracted her attention, and now the benevolent features of the stranger. Unable to comprehend the rising emotions of her mind, she withdrew her hand from that of Eliezer, and swifter than the arrow's flight, she sought her mother's dwelling, where, in few and incoherent words, from which her friends could neither gather meaning nor connection, she endeavoured to relate what had passed.

The sight of the glittering presents, however, explained to Laban more than he could understand from his sister's

words, and he went forth to welcome the generous stranger, and bring him to the house.

Now is the moon sole mistress of the skies; attended by a brilliant train of stars, she illumines the misty pastures. The shepherd Ashbel, casting upward a skilful look, foretels, from the bluntness of her horns, high winds ere morning, whilst his wedded Taphanes, seated by his side at their cottage door, relates to him what have been her employments that day.

On a sudden they hear the sound of stifled sobs, breaking at intervals into cries of extreme, but infantine distress. Ashbel withdrew his arm from the waist of his love, and both rose hastily to meet the damsel who approached them. My loved Hezzai! exclaimed Taphanes, is it thou? but why these tears, my dearest child?—speak, confide thy griefs to me,

In a voice nearly inarticulate from excess of sorrow, Hezzai answered, She leaves us! we lose her! at day-break she will quit her tents for ever, and never, never shall we behold her more. Rebekah leaves us; she goes into the south country—far, far beyond our Euphrates—further than Lebanon or Carmel—near unto Egypt is the land whither she goes. The stranger who deprives us of her, sleeps at Laban's dwelling; he has enriched her mother and her kindred with presents in gold and silver, and precious things. Our Rebekah's heart will break with grief—she is now in her mother's chamber; they sent me to thee, Taphanes, and wait thy coming.

The trembling Taphanes heard no more, but crossing the field which divided her abode from that of Zarapha, she entered the room whither Laban directed her, and threw herself into the arms of Rebekah.

Welcome, sweet Taphanes! said the venerable widow; then added, smiling,

Wouldest thou not imagine a heavy evil had befallen my Rebekah? Sit thee down beside Josabad, young woman, and thou, my child, sit between thy friend and me. Thy regret at parting with us, and leaving thy native land, to go into a distant and unknown country to be wedded to one, who, although of our kindred, is yet a stranger, is natural—nay, becoming, and I should grieve didst thou not feel the keenest anguish; but to persist in rejecting our wish is not right, my love, and dost thou think I would urge thee to leave me were I not assured that in thus doing we all obey the will of God? Thou heardest the words of the steward; the Lord himself hath chosen thee to be the wife of Isaac, and most highly exalted art thou in being called to unite in wedlock with the heir of Abraham, that holy Patriarch, whose name for wisdom, faith, and righteousness, is known throughout the East: how then can we reject this alliance? Well favored as are the daughters of Canaan, he despises

loveliness when joined to idolatry, and seeks a beauteous maiden for his son, who, with him, worships one eternal God.

She paused, when her aged kinsman, addressing Rebekah, continued, Thou wouldst not be thus cast down, my child, didst thou know how kind and indulgent is the venerable Patriarch. Sarah his wife is no more; wherefore thou wilt be sole mistress over the affections of Isaac—his heart is now wedded to his mother's grave, but thou wilt soon wean the gentle youth from grief, and burst upon his sight, made dim with weeping, a cheering sun; arrayed in thine own matchless beauty, what life and pleasure thy presence will give his sorrowing heart!

Dost smile, my young one? said Zarapha; have then the words of our kinsman the power to make thee smile? Now do I see we shall prevail.—Isaac, as we are informed by the steward, is by nature soft and humane; eminent for filial piety and tenderness towards man-

kind. Accustomed for so many years to the converse of his mother, he is most partial to domestic pleasures, and prefers the company of a beloved female to that of his own sex; and where can be found a youthful mind endowed with more wisdom, or a disposition with more meekness than is thine? In all things seek to please him, for by increasing his felicity, thou wilt increase thine own. Give way to his voice, and never let it be asked which of us twain shall yield? Boast not of thy perfections in his hearing, for if he truly love thee, he will be the first to discover them; and if, which God avert! his affection decrease, vanity will but give birth to disgust, and self-importance to neglect. Behold his faults with compassion, and conceal them from the eyes of thy neighbour. Refrain from frequent weeping; for when thy tears have lost their power, and flow unheeded, then hast thou lost the love of thy husband. But above all, Rebekah—oh! above all, let thy mind to him be as open

as thy hand—do nothing without his knowledge, in the hope of giving unexpected joy to others, which in the innocence of thy heart thou art prone to, thou mayest be tempted to do that which may bring everlasting repentance; deceive him not, O never deceive him; mark my words—the words of thy mother, thine only parent—never let even thy best intentions betray thee to act unknown to him. Go hand in hand through life, and neither strive to linger behind, or to gain upon his steps. And now behold, my child, we have talked the night away, and the agitation of our minds from this sudden wonder, will not now admit of repose. Wouldst thou commune apart with thy friend Taphanes? Stay here then, whilst I prepare thy nurse and handmaidens who are to accompany thee to Canaan.

She rose, and with Josabad, left the room. The weeping damsels now alone, lifted up their eyes, and rushing into the arms of each other, long wept in silence.

Talk not of separation, said Taphanes: dear as is to me this land, and dear my Ashbel, yet will I not part with thee, Rebekah; I cannot—wherever thou goest, thither will I go also: I will attend thy steps, listen to thy voice, and watch thy looks; my days shall be spent in loving thee, and at night my bosom shall be thy pillow.

They again embraced. No, my Taphanes, said Rebekah, my generous friend! never will I receive so great a sacrifice: here remain, my love, in thy native fields, blest with the affection of thy virtuous husband, whilst I, by yielding to the prayers of my mother, and the wishes of my kindred, obey the will of the Almighty.—Then sinking on her knees, she implored the Most High to endue her with fortitude, and so prepare Abraham and Isaac, that she might find favour in their sight.

Laban entering hastily, his looks brightened with pleasure, demanded, Where is my sister? where is the future

bride of the rich and princely Isaac? Come forth, Rebekah! The camels are laden with the presents we send with thee—the men are eager to depart, Deborah and thy handmaidens are prepared, and the good Eliezer is anxious to see thee. We wished him to tarry with us yet ten days, but he is desirous of returning without further delay.

A faintness came over Rebekah, and she had sunk to the ground had not Laban and Taphanes supported her. He seized the moment of her recovery to lead her to the outward chamber, where were assembled the strangers, her mother, and her kindred. Eliezer, struck by the dejection of her countenance, and the languor spread over her delicate limbs, advanced, and taking her hand, said, whilst his voice trembled with emotion—

Sweetest innocent! fairest flower of this hallowed land! these silent tears seem to reproach me for thus taking thee from thy much loved country; rather than oc-

casion thee another moment of grief, I will arise and return to my master without the jewel for which I came. Is thy heart already given to a youth of Mesopotamia?—No; then why thus droops thy head, and why is thy lovely face averted? Speak, sweet lamb. O had our gentle Isaac seen thee when stooping the vessel to my lips, thou badest me drink, how would he have loved thee! and couldst thou behold the beauteous youth when supporting the feeble steps of his father, how soon would these sighs be hushed, and these tears be wiped away! Thy lips move—thou speakest, blossom, yet cannot my ears, heavy with age, catch the sound of thy voice. Wilt thou then go with me?——A blush!—this saith more than words. Wilt thou love our Isaac?——A smile!—my fears are vanished. I now see thy virgin bashfulness hath yielded to the sacred will of the Lord. Then turning to the men, he ordered the camels to be brought to the door.

This was the signal for departure, and Rebekah, on hearing it, sprang to the arms of her mother, who hung over her in speechless tenderness. Laban perceiving that the fortitude of Zarapha was giving way to regret, took Rebekah from her, and kissing her glowing cheek, said, The blessing of God, and the prosperity of the land, be with thee, my sister, and with thy children everlastingly. All present embraced her; she gave her hand to Ashbel, who pressed it to his lips; and once more clasped Taphanes to her bosom.

And now she suffered herself to be led by Laban and Eliezer to a camel, distinguished from the rest by its covering of scarlet cloth, and gorgeous trappings. When seated thereon, Deborah threw over her a pale blue mantle, richly embroidered with silver—one of the precious gifts made her by Abraham. Zarapha advancing, whispered the venerable matron—O thou who nursed my Rebekah's infancy, be to her a mother! Deborah

pressed the hand of her mistress, and received the sacred trust with respect and gratitude. She was then placed with the handmaidens, on the backs of the camels, which now rose from the ground, and slowly moved from the dwelling. Rebekah was seen looking back until hid from sight by a thick grove of trees. Each then repaired homeward, mourning the loss Padan-aran had sustained, but rejoicing in the honors Rebekah was called to enjoy when wedded to the pious heir of Abraham's virtues and possessions.

Enter yon field shaded from the sun by innumerable cypresses arranged at equal distances. Cast thy eyes to the further extremity of this field of Machpelah, and thou wilt discern the dark entrance of a cave. How awful the sepulchre of the dead! Planted on either side are two shrubs named Rose-of-a-day, and well

they typify human existence. The flower no sooner blown, than scattered on the ground by the shooting of the bud concealed beneath its leaves; this having enjoyed its few and gliding hours, shares the same untimely fate, to give way to a new expanding bud. As flower succeeds flower, man succeeds man—his life as short, his memory as fleeting! And now behold these symbols of mortality contrasted with an emblem of the spirit in yon aspiring, pure, immortal cedar, whose existence is proof to the worm of corruption.

From this hallowed spot the beasts of the field are alone excluded: it is open to the entrance of all mankind; the idolater of Canaan has access to it with the same freedom as those of the house of Abraham, for though he does not acknowledge the Lord, yet he reverences the remains of the dead.

Seated on a bank beside the mighty stone which closes the mouth of the sepulchre, behold the Patriarch and his son.

The eyes of the former are fixed on the spot where is buried the body of his wife, and hither he comes each day to meditate on the change in himself, which exhausted nature has long desired. But far different thoughts occupied the mind of Isaac; such contemplations dwell not with his age.

My father, he said, twice hath the moon been at its full since Eliezer left us to go to Padan-aran, and yet is he not returned.—And do thy hours then linger, my Isaac? returned the Patriarch. Is not the way distant, and does not the thing itself require time and care? It does indeed, for on the wisdom of his choice depends thy future happiness; and may thy union be as lasting as that which existed between Sarah and myself! Nay, my son, why this sudden dejection—these starting tears? Thou wouldst not that thy mother had been immortal in the body? Compare her present state with that she had many years endured, and thou must acknowledge that thy sorrow

is unjust—nay, selfish, my Isaac.—Dost thou think I shall not willingly, nay with eagerness, resign this flesh, when commanded by Him who clothed me in it? At morn we rise light and vigorous, but at night, weary, joyless, and sated, happy are we to creep to our beds, and sink into the peaceful arms of sleep. I am now arrived at extreme old age. Time between father and son holds the balance of wisdom: as intellects weaken in the one, they strengthen in the other; and O may thy scale sink heavily laden with honor and prosperity in righteousness.

Look up, my son; soon will thy grief for the loss of thy mother be subdued by the company of the damsel who is to be thy wife. Prepare thy mind to meet her, and commune with thyself on thy future moments. It is easier to win love, than to retain it, and once fled, it can never be recalled:—be this thy care. Leave to herself the management of her household, and when she is employed therein,

reward her with kind looks; commend the fruits of her industry, and taste with double relish, that which her hands have prepared. Flatter her not in the early days of marriage, neither subject thyself to her smiles or her frowns, for ill-placed obedience cannot long exist; but though thy helpmate must submit to thee, let thy authority fall so lightly that she may not feel it; so shall thy hours be rich in new-springing delights.

They rose, and leaving the holy spot, Abraham returned to his tents, whilst Isaac, unable to persevere in his usual employments from the anxious suspense he suffered at Eliezer's stay, strolled towards Lahai-roi. The first interview with his bride presented itself to his imagination in a thousand different shapes, and he stood wrapped in meditation.

Disturbed at length by the plaintive chirp of a bird, he went over to the thicket from whence the little voice proceeded, and gently putting aside the leaves, beheld a nest of unfledged night-

ingales: one of the brood had fallen over the edge, and lay mournfully chirruping on the ground. He stooped, and taking it up, restored it to its downy bed; he marked the helpless state of the callow young, and examined with curious eye, the form and construction of the nest. The hen returned; her bill was laden with food, with which she fed her nestlings, and again she disappeared, but she was quickly succeeded by her mate, who dropped the welcome grain into the open beak. Thus, by alternate flight and return, having given sufficient nourishment with a regularity which pleased Isaac, neither omitting this young one, nor filling that with too great abundance, the hen sprang upon her nest, fondly covering them with her wings and downy breast, whilst her affectionate mate flew to an adjacent branch, and cheered her with the wonderfully melting warbles of his voice.

Isaac, fearful of disturbing them, retired softly from the spot, and when at a

distance, tenderly exclaimed, Matchless example of married love! Come hither, ye wives and husbands—come, and here learn your duties! here will ye learn fondness towards each other, and impartial love to your children.—O nature! admirable art thou in all thy ways! and from the glorious sun, even to the grain of sand, the spirit of the Lord pervades all things.——But, O my heart!—what behold I yonder?—A train of camels! On the foremost methinks I can distinguish women—a man advances before the rest—Ye blessed heavens, it is Eliezer!

On entering the field of Lahai-roi, Rebekah said to the steward, What is he, my aged friend, whom I have long observed standing with folded arms, and eyes fixed upon the ground? And now he lifts up his hands, and looks gazing towards us—say, who is it? Eliezer smiling, answered, It is he—Isaac, my master's son.

Rebekah trembled, and laid her hand

upon her throbbing heart. On being assisted to dismount from the camel, she covered herself with her veil, and stood waiting the approach of Isaac: stealing a timid look towards Eliezer, she saw him clasped in the arms of a tall and graceful youth. O my child, whispered Deborah, lift up thine eyes, and examine his form and features, and straitway will vanish thy distress, thy fears, and terrors. How delicate his shape! what angelic softness in his countenance! how sweet his voice!—all these bespeak the gentleness of his mind.

Highly am I honored above men, said Isaac, advancing, that thou, for me, O gracious maiden, hast consented to leave thy native land, at the prayers of this my friend; yet though thou art my kinswoman, flesh of my flesh, and a damsel of my family, yet will not I attempt, by uncovering thy face, to convince my eyes of what Eliezer hath told me, but will leave to my father's hand, the removing thy veil—and behold he comes. Ap-

proach then, sweet Rebekah, and in the arms of the venerable Abraham, think thou art restored to the parent thou hast left behind. The words of kind attention, the respectful tone of voice, the obeisance full of grace and elegance were not lost upon Rebekah, and her pleasure was now as great as had been her fears.

Art thou returned to me? exclaimed the Patriarch; O welcome, Eliezer, welcome to Kirjith-arba! But say, hast thou succeeded?—which—say, which is the chosen damsel? Rebekah attempted to fall at the Patriarch's feet, but he caught her in his arms; and having lifted up her veil with one hand, whilst supporting her with the other, he gazed with holy admiration on her fair and blushing face.

Then turning to Eliezer, he said, Methinks I behold in her features, a resemblance to those of my brother Nahor. Upon which, Eliezer answered, that she was daughter to Bethuel, the son of Nahor; adding, among the children of

Padan-aran, there is not one more renowned for obedience, for industry, for mildness, and for charity. Knowing this, look at her face and form, my lord; then must thou needs confess she is the rarest jewel Mesopotamia e'er produced.

Abraham, supporting Rebekah on one arm, extended his other to receive his son, the excess of whose admiration and gratitude glowed upon his features.

Holding the youthful pair thus within his embrace, the Patriarch stood; then, looking upward, he cried, On the spot we now stand, even beneath the branches of this sacred oak of Mamre, thou, O Lord, didst appear in thy glory, and by the lips of thine angels, who then disdained not to be here entertained by me, thy servant, didst promise me this son; look down upon him, upon this child of my age, O gracious Lord! and here confirm thy blessings—that when my mortal part is laid by the side of Sarah, these may keep thy ways, bring up with impartial affection, their children in thy fear,

and exercise dominion in the land with justice and moderation—Treasures of my heart! my precious young ones! may your band of union be broken only by death, and the lives of each be such, that after death, I may behold ye united in the mansions of the blessed.

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

PATRIARCHAL TIMES.

BOOK IV.

JACOB.

ARGUMENT.

Beersheba—Evening—Rebekah's reflections—Consoled by Isaac—Characters of their sons, Esau and Jacob—Esau returns from the chace, and Jacob from his pastures—The herd of kine, and the fountain-grove—Esau's grief and despair—Nathanel, the steward of Isaac, informs Judith that Jacob has obtained his brother's birthright—Her wrath—Jacob's life preserved by Selemia—Esau's meeting with his mother.

THE setting sun gives warning to quit the field; the oxen are unyoked from the plough, and those employed in treading out the rice, are released from toil. And now are seen the various animals devouring, with keen appetite, their evening portions, consisting of barley, chopped straw, lentiles, clover, beans, acorns,

chesnuts, and date-stones. Give a handful above measure, young men, and ye will be thanked by beams of gratitude from their speaking eyes.

The labourers engaged in winnowing corn, now leave the threshing-floors, and those who had finished their employment of pruning the vineyards, wait at the door of the store-house to receive their pay from Nathanel the steward, who is gone to see that the stalled calves have their wonted portion of milk. At his return, he directed the occupations of the following morning, desiring them to begin by the sixth hour to reap the adjoining field, that the harvest might, if possible, be got in ere the rains should fall. They were departing, cheered by the smile of encouragement with which Nathanel gilded their wages, when he called after them— Should ye meet Esau or Jacob, say that their father desires their presence.

Rebekah heard the words, and beckoning the steward to approach, asked him, was not her younger son yet come back.

He is not; neither is my lord Esau returned to his home, replied Nathanel, although long expected: a messenger sent by Judith his wife, came but now from thence to seek him. The steward then enquired for his master, but on being informed that Isaac slept, he withdrew.

Near the door of the house was a seat formed of the unwrought branches of trees, turned and fashioned into the shape required, with seeming negligence, but real art; and here the aged matron sat, whilst within the dwelling lay the holy Patriarch.—Indulge sweet sleep, O Isaac! for in sleep thine infirmities are no longer felt; thy sight, thy youth, thy vigour is in sleep restored, and thy soul in pleasing dreams enjoyeth boundless liberty.

Rebekah looked anxiously around, watching the approach of a beloved one. She listened to the drowsy half-formed notes of the birds retired to their nests, and watched the rising of the moon; she

looked upon the dark shadows cast on the valley by the opposite mountains, and her mind, invited to reflection by the serenity of the heavens, and the silence around her, resigned itself to regret and melancholy. The days of her youth were still fresh in mind, and though the land of Canaan was fair, yet fairer seemed to her recollection the land which gave her birth.

O Padan-aran! far dost thou excel in beauty and fertility all the countries I have since beheld! Thy flowers could boast of richer tints and fragrance, thy plants of more balsamic qualities than can the plants and flowers of other spots. How pure and serene thy air! how enlivening thy sun-beams, and how mild the light of thy moon! and yet neither sun or moon are changed—the change, alas! is in myself. Haran — Scirtas — Euphrates — what tender emotions your cherished names awaken in my soul! O beloved city! much loved rivers! On your banks I sported in my childhood,

and in my youth led my flocks to browse thereon, and drink of your delicious waters.—Taphanes too! my friend Taphanes! —— Precious remembrance of times for ever fled!

Turning her dejected eyes upon a border of flowers near her, some of which were in full bloom, long she gazed upon them, then plucking one of each—Such I was, and now how like unto this faded flower drooping to decay! My spring but shewed itself to vanish, my summer fled with winged speed, my autumn is gliding fast away, and soon will my winter come. All natnre looks forward to that delightful season, when these yellow leaves will be succeeded by new-born green, and yon sapless tree blush with roses; but no second spring awaiteth me—(and she gently sighed). But when these plants, this earth, yon firmament, nay, the universe itself, shall be no more, where then shall I be? She raised her clasped hands, and with a sweet smile of hope, fixed her eyes on heaven.

Her meditations were here interrupted by the Patriarch, who affectionately called upon her name—a call ever obeyed with alacrity by Rebekah. Taking her hand between his, Thou art chilled, my beloved, remarked the aged Isaac: the season is autumn, and we, my Rebekah, are far advanced in the autumn of life—thou shouldest not thus expose thyself to the air of night. Leave me not yet, for my soul is heavy when thou art away.—I awoke even now, and the words thou spakest aloud, when communing with thy heart, reached my ear. My faithful one, believe me, hadst thou passed thy youth in Canaan, and wert now in Padan-aran, thy reflections would have been even thus; it is the eye of youth that paints the surrounding prospect. The rose with me has lost its hue, but it is because my sight is dimmed; the lark with me has forgotten his once melting note, for my ear is dead, and with me no longer has the pine its flavour, or the clove its fragrance; but should I say to

your youthful Jacob, How appear these things to thee? and he would answer—What so fragrant as the clove, or delicious as the pine? the hue of the rose delights the eye, and the note of the lark gives rapture to the soul.—Thou lamentest that thou art no longer young! Even now how far thou suppassest the women of Canaan; resembling poplars, their fair green boughs shoot proudly upwards, flourishing in selfish beauty, whilst thou, my Rebekah, like a spreading elm, extendest thy protecting arms on every side, shielding the oppressed from the scorching rays of injustice, and the outcast poor from the chilling storms of poverty.

Rebekah, raising the languid hand of her husband to her lips, asked, Can love survive youth?—When I received thee from Eliezer, replied Isaac, I looked on thy charms with wonder and delight. When thou becamest the mother of my twin sons, I gloried in thee; but now that for many years thou hast been my

sole companion, my adviser, my comforter—that thou hast, with unexampled tenderness, administered to my wants in infirmity, and hushed my some time murmuring with holy remonstrances, it is now that I honour, I revere, and love thee.—Blessed be my father Abraham, for giving thee to me for wife, by which I have reaped so long the precious fruits of an early union of hearts and hands, and rejoiced am I for yielding blindly to his will. O would that Esau had done likewise! and in compliance with our wish, married a child of my brother Ishmael!—a righteous man is Ishmael, and what race more kingly, more powerful in the land than his?—Esau having, unknown to us, taken a wife from among the impious daughters of Heth, is an evil which lies heavy on my soul, and will, I fear, bring upon him the anger of the Almighty.

Arrogant and haughty is indeed the mind of Judith, said Rebekah; never does she bow the head when passing me.

When in my presence, she respects me not as the mother of her husband, but either treats me with silent neglect, or by mean insinuation, despises the infirmities of my age, whilst boasting of her own youthful perfections. Her hands are unlearned in the useful works of her own home; her feet are given to wandering; she walks abroad with face uncovered, yet is not shame-faced; and whilst she passes the idle hour in the dwellings of her neighbours, hearing and spreading unprofitable tales, her own dwelling remains neglected. If Jacob also take a wife of the daughters of Heth, what good shall my life do me?

Fear not, replied the Patriarch; the mind of Jacob is not fashioned like that of Esau: himself thoughtful, cautious, and wary, he cannot be ensnared by female wiles. Ere he speaks, he says, 'Take heed what thou sayest;' and all his actions are the consequence of reflection. When a child, I marked him: he sowed a measure of barley in his little

field, and when the green ear sprouted, he counted each grain thereon to know the produce :—' I shall receive full forty fold,' said Jacob ; ' this is good increase.'

The affections of Rebekah leaned to her fairest son, and she replied, Why slight our younger for a virtue so rare in youth, and which parents in every land strive to inculcate into their children? Though Jacob, as was my brother Laban, be thrifty, he is, like him, generous, and though prudent, warm-hearted.—O the archness of that smile! how doth it reprove the weakness of an aged matron!—nay, mock me not when I own the real cause of my preference for Jacob. Most true, in him I see thy youth revived—I see again that form which won my virgin heart—I hear again, in his sweet voice, thy voice of love. The speech of Jacob is modest, solemn, and deliberate; he seldom even smiles, and when he does, how angelic are his smiles appearing through the soft shade of melancholy ever spread over his comely features! But the voice

of Esau is always on the stretch of wild tumultuous laughter; his lightest footsteps are harsh to Jacob's firmest tread, and even his fondest caresses seem acts of violence. A few days back he went out to provide venison, and from morning's dawn until the rising of the evening star he chased a deer—but when Judith went forth to meet him, expecting to see the produce of the day, the thoughtless prodigal returned, with calm indifference, eating an apple of Paradise, for which he had exchanged the deer, with a passing stranger who admired the velvet of its horns.

A smile stole over the features of Isaac, which, to conceal from Rebekah, he drew his hand across his face, at the same time expressing his opinion on Esau's character in a half-whispered remark: 'Rugged is the stock of the vine, but what so excellent as the fruit thereof?'

Soft as the balmy air when gliding through the almond grove it stops to kiss

the silky blossoms — Rebekah ere she heard the steps of Jacob, or saw his person, felt the pressure of his gentle lips upon her matron cheek. The breast of the partial mother heaved with delight, and her eyes filled with tears, when sitting beside her he folded his arm around her neck.

Loud, harsh, and wild as the northern wind, heard afar, striking on the affrighted ear, disturbing the gloom of night, howling o'er the waste and buffeting the branches of the towering oak, were the cries and shouts of Esau, proclaiming his return from the chase.—The walls of the dwelling shook as he ran forward, and the roof rang with the clattering sound of his quiver, darts, and bow, which, on entering, he flung upon the ground.

Advancing hastily to Isaac's bed, and rudely plucking the covering from his face, he said, Dost sleep, my father? I am returned from the desert, whither I went, at my wife's command, to seek the

eggs of ostriches: I upturned the sands full many a furlong, yet found but six; they are here in this basket: though thou canst not see, yet mayest thou feel, thou shalt have them. They are nourishing for one of thine age, and I know thou takest delight in such food.

Isaac laying his hand on the garment of Esau, drew it to him, saying, How sweet is the raiment of my son! thy raiment smelleth of the field, my Esau; and now, I pray thee, sit thee beside me, and say where hast thou been these ten days, for thus long it is since thou wast here. Esau laughed, and said that he had been searching throughout the land for a wife for Jacob, and having found no one so lovely as Selemia, the half-sister of his own wife, he had brought her to his tents, where she now dwelt with Judith; adding, that although Jacob had solemnly rejected her, he yet hoped that by beholding her each day, he might in time consent to love the gentle maid.

The heart of Isaac waxed sorrowful at these tidings, but he feared to speak: and Rebekah, though struck with sudden grief, opened not her lips. Jacob, who had marked what passed within the bosoms of the venerable pair, quickly relieved their anxiety.

Consent to love! repeated he with gaiety, thou art kind, my brother, but I repeat to thee, never will I take a help-mate from among the daughters of Heth: they are, in general, most beautiful, but beauty alone is not that I seek. They are richly attired, but it is not jewels of gold and silver and costly garments, a sweet singing voice, and skill in playing on the harp and lyre I look for in a wife, though all these be excellencies, provided they be joined to that I require. —Can Selemia preserve the oil, or dry the date and fig for winter store? can she wash the raiments in the stream, or milk the ewes and goats? can she spin the wool of our flocks, or handle the distaff? Mildness sits on her brow, and

sweetness shines in every feature—but say, my brother, wherefore over her person is spread an ever-dying languor? her eyes are always half closed, she shivers and faints without cause, and whether a dove eats out of her hand or a lamb bleeds at her feet, the incessant smile hangs on her ruby lip and dimples her lovely cheek. When silent, her head, in languishing movements, inclines alternately on either polished shoulder, and if she venture to speak, her tongue falters, she smiles at her errors, errs again, blushes in confusion, and laughs at her blushes.

My mother, dost thou mark me? continued Jacob, addressing Rebekah; I was with Selemia yesterday, discoursing on the late productive harvest, when, unmindful of my words, she sank upon the margin of the fountain near my brother's tents, and stooping, gazed on the pleasing image reflected by the waters: then slowly gathering the reeds and wild flowers growing around her she

twisted them into chaplets to adorn her flaxen hair; but her mind, variable as the clouds of heaven—these were changed for others, soon also slighted and cast into the river: adown the stream they glided and thus glided away her precious moments in idleness and folly. No, I will not wed until I find one such as my father has described my mother when she was young.

Rebekah listened with rapture to the voice of her favorite, and when he ceased speaking, she pressed his hand between hers. Though Selemia cannot win thy love, replied Esau, after much noisy mirth, she hath made thee eloquent: never did I hear my brother speak so tuneful and descriptive. But since thou wilt not have a white-haired maid of Heth, and dost reject an alliance with the family of Ishmael, as too warlike for one of thy peace-loving nature, I will fetch thee a dark-skinned damsel from Ethiopia.

But say, my son, said Isaac, willing

to change the discourse; hast thou planted the grove of tamarinds to shade the fountain wherein thou bathest at thy return from hunting? If thou hast, although dim-sighted and infirm, I will go thither, so thou wilt support me, Esau, and I will sit beneath their shade and enjoy their fragrance, and at a future time taste their fruit. Thou shalt, my father, he replied, and so shall my mother when the grove *is* planted, but so eager have I been to hunt a wife for Jacob, that from the hour I told thee my intention unto this I never thought upon it. O thou idle one! exclaimed Jacob, smiling, will this excuse serve thee? never yet did I know thee accomplish an allotted task; for that word, *task*, alone frights thee from performance.

And thou, dear Jacob, enquired Rebekah, hast thou succeeded in thy wishes? No, my mother.—Amor, the Canaanite, still denies me: he hath not sufficient pasture for his cattle, or herdsmen to attend them, yet will he not part with

even one of the ten kine I so earnestly craved at his hands.—And what was Amor's plea for refusing to give them to thee? demanded Esau. Give! repeated Jacob, I sought not a gift but a purchase; nay, tendered fifty shekels of silver, a sum my servants considered far exceeding their value.—I this day again examined the beasts, and for size, shape, and colour find them excel all that my eyes ever witnessed; but unavailing were my offers and entreaties, neither would he tell me wherefore he repulsed my suit with such determined stubborness.—Say, my father, what have we done to these unbelievers that they should still hold those of our house in such abhorrence? do they envy the encrease with which the Lord hath blessed us? I tell thee there is danger in meeting a Canaanite after sunset, and complaints are daily made by our men to Nathanel of the mischief they do our fields, our flocks, and wells—destroying the fences, scattering the sheep, and filling the water with sand and stones.

As when two children having seized a nest of callow birds—the one examines the tender young with eager joy, whilst the other, fearful of being deprived of his treasure, grasps it firmly between his little hands—thus Rebekah continued to gaze on the beauty of Jacob, and Isaac to hold the garment of the bold and manly Esau; and thus, unconscious of the lateness of the hour, would the aged pair have long detained their sons, when Esau, starting up, rushed from the room, and Jacob, also wrapped in thought, slowly followed.

O most happy are we, my love, cried the Patriarch, in the possession of these youths! when I hear my Esau's voice, I forget his errors: and when Jacob draws near, I say, here is one who never erred. Thy mother, replied Rebekah, was not more blessed in thee than I am in my children. And dost thou behold, my wife, how great is their affection for each other? never does Esau seek to make his brother feel that he is the younger,

neither does Jacob appear to envy Esau the wealth, the honors, and power he will inherit when I am gathered to my fathers. O be assured that when our elder is master of all, he will protect his brother from every evil, and share with him every bliss, only requiring in return, that submission and reverence justly due from the younger to the heir.

Were the words of Isaac heard by Rebekah? alas! they were, and every word was a thorn deeply piercing her throbbing heart. She rose from the side of his bed, and observed, whilst a sudden and pensive sadness appeared in her features—The moon is sinking below the horizon:—ere we are left in total darkness I must repair to my chamber, lest the fire therein should be extinguished.

Isaac was left to undisturbed tranquillity, but rest was not with Rebekah, and dawn appeared ere she could compose her mind to sleep.

Forth from her tents came Judith, Esau's wife, speaking to a servant of Isaac, who, leaving her at the door, returned to his master's dwelling, distant hence a few furlongs.

Judith, in stature far exceeds the women of her native city, and in looks the haughtiest of the haughty; her hair black and shining as the plumage of the raven, is braided in folds around her temples, and fastened on the crown of her head with golden bodkins; from her full dark eye flash pride and disdain; frowns hang upon her brow, and on her pouting nether lip sit scorn and anger.

With hurried step she traversed the path before the tent, then stopped and listened, and again walked to and fro.—Another day is past, and yet he comes not!—Why does not Esau come, or rather why did I wed a hunter, a wild one, a savage of the forest?—ever absent! When he quitted me to seek for ostrich eggs he promised to return ere night, but even the desert is more pleasing to him

than his tents. I would entreat him calmly did not the indignation of my soul at his neglect, prevent me.—Threats, reproaches, and the harshest expressions my wrath can frame will I pour upon his head when he does come back, for his disregard to my comfort and situation deserves all, and none other shall he have until he resign his bow and dwell with me.

If this be thy resolution, said the meek Selemia, leaving the tent, never wilt thou domesticate thy husband—when from thee, my sister, thou lamentest his absence, yet when with thee thou ever givest him reason to think his presence is unwelcome. Were I wedded to his brother I would not thus deride his affections, or fright them from me:—O delightful should be his home! To play with the ringlets of his hair my greatest pleasure, and to anoint his graceful head, and improve the daintiness of his skin my best employment: for these enchanting purposes my hours

should be spent in ranging the gardens to collect sweet blossoms, buds, and gums, and in extracting their oils and juices to gratify my love—O worshipped Jacob! and languidly she unclasped her sparkling bracelets and stroked her white and slender arms.

Judith perceiving a man driving cattle down the hills, and imagining that it was one of Isaac's herdsmen leading them to pasture, went forward to enquire whether he had seen her husband. Pursuing the winding path through a low plantation of scarlet oaks, she reached the fountain of the valley, in which Esau was accustomed to bathe, and which he had long designed to shade from heat and cold by planting trees on its naked banks: but great was the astonishment of Judith on beholding the purpose of her husband already accomplished.

The spot which only the night before lay bleak and unsheltered, was now beautified by a grove of citrons, dates, and

tamarinds, intermingled with silver pines, and drooping willows, whose waving branches threw a pleasing shade upon the waters. By means of large stones, and huge fragments of rocks, collected and piled with skill in different parts, the single stream was multiplied into divers smaller, which, falling into new-made hollows, formed beautiful cascades, and terminated in a smooth unruffled lake. On the surface of this were now seen floating the mallow, the blue lily, the three-leafed purple flower, and other plants that delight to bloom where their loveliness may be reflected. The banks which so lately were disfigured with brambles, nettles, thorny bushes, aconite, and other baleful weeds, were richly adorned with melon-vines, strawberries, dwarf-cherries, and such grateful fruits, though lowly, yet much prized.

Judith, casting her wondering eyes around, saw several men engaged, and one in the act of planting a palm-tree towards the verge of the upper waterfall,

whom, on advancing, she perceived was Jacob. Ere she had time to speak, the herd of kine which she had distinguished afar, were close behind her; at their deep lowing, she turned her head, and recognized in the driver of the cattle, her husband Esau.

The eyes of Jacob were fixed upon the kine, and those of Esau upon the newly-risen grove; each comprehended what had been the nightly employment of the other; their hearts burned with grateful friendship, and at the same moment, each opened his arms to clasp his brother to his bosom.

Jacob, said the elder, although the Canaanites overlook thee for slighting their damsels, and are envious of our father's encreasing wealth, I, through this my noble wife, am a favoured one amongst them. On leaving thee last night, I went to Amor, who, quitting his bed at my desire, granted to me, without hesitation, what neither thy prayers nor

gold could obtain. Take these kine, my brother, and may they increase a hundred fold, and thou behold their young scattered through thy pastures far and wide.

O Esau! replied Jacob, ever generous and brotherly hast thou been to me! Accept then, with the blessing of God, this humble tribute of my love:—Mayest thou behold thy children, and the offspring of thy sons and daughters sporting beneath the shade of this grove. Hither daily come to taste the freshness of the morning air, be sheltered here from oppressive heats, and here enjoy, thou and thine, the welcome fruits, which in season, these youthful trees will produce. May the turtle dove here build its nest, and rear its young, and may the pious stork take up its abode in the topmost boughs of these tall flourishing pines. On every spray shall light a feathered singer to cheer thy soul with melody, and from every citron branch shall hang the nest of the red-breasted humming-bird—

smallest, loveliest of its kind!—And they pressed each other's hands with looks of gratitude and affection.

I am not weary with my journey, said Esau; but thou, my brother, I perceive, art spent with thy kind labour, wherefore thou shalt not quit us yet. Judith will fetch us other garments, these we have on being wet with the dews of night; and ere her return, we will refresh ourselves by bathing at my fountain.—Wilt thou, my wife?—and bring us cakes of meal, and roasted kid? I prefer feeding beneath these shady trees to entering our tents:—hasten, noble wife, and in thy hand lead hither thy fair sister and her harmonious lyre, for the mind of Jacob lacks amusement after his midnight toil.

Judith spake; her voice was severe, and her looks contemptuous, Jacob ever being hateful in her eye. Two causes, like envenomed darts, rankled in her heart against him—his having, when both were lads, beguiled her husband

Esau of the honors of his birth, by withholding food until the starving youth had sworn away his seniority, called forth all her jealousy and detestation, and his now rejecting the hand of her sister was an insult never to be forgiven. Wherefore, addressing Esau deridingly, she asked, And wilt thou that I send hither a mess of red lentile pottage likewise? It is a food I have heard among my neighbours, thou preferest to all other, on which account the surname of Edom was given thee: most temptingly red is the pottage made of lentiles!

Jacob felt the full force of her taunt, and blushed; but the inconsiderate Esau, having long forgotten the evil done him by this overreach, saw not the malice hid beneath her words, and carelessly replied, Yes, my wife, and send also milk of sheep, and butter of kine. When we have bathed and fed, we will together enter my tent; for having lost the repose of the night, it is but just that we should indulge in sleep until noon.

And if thou art to waste thy time in swimming, and feasting, and dreaming, returned Judith, when art thou to attend thy father's call? Know, Esau, that ere dawn appeared, and often since, have servants come in haste from Isaac seeking thee. To acquaint thee with his commands, I left my tents, for well thou knowest he is aged, and subject at this period of the year to bodily pangs which threaten sudden dissolution. Dost thou not comprehend my meaning? Thy father sickens, and thou art thy father's heir, as my expected, unborn babe is thine. To rouse thy senses, teach thy heart, and recal lost honour, I hither came—I had not else risen thus early.

Without deigning to notice Jacob, she turned away; and as she departed, Esau gazed after her, admiring—How sublime her shape! how loftily she carries herself, and with what sober dignity she walks! Canaan cannot shew a more majestic woman! Would that thou also wert wedded, my brother. Still he

followed Judith with his eyes, until being reminded by Jacob of his father's message, he prepared to obey, saying, Be not alarmed at Judith's words, for thus daily she attacks my ear with warnings of my father's death, her nature being tender and apprehensive. I will be there and back ere my wife return with that we have asked of her.—And I, said Jacob, breaking a branch from a poplar tree, whilst thou art gone, will drive my kine homeward, and gratify my mother's sight with thy kind gift.

How beauteous my fountain appears from this spot! said Esau, looking back. That which thou and thy men have accomplished in a few hours, would have taken me, *the idle one,* and mine, many weeks to perform. I owe thee much, my brother, for this kindness, and will supply thee with venison months to come.—Now will I hasten to my father, whom I will constrain to leave his bed, and visit my grove, whilst thou, Jacob, prevailest on my mother to meet us here, for we

will pass this happy day beside my fountain.

Jacob, certain of Rebekah's compliance with his slightest wish, promised to bring her; then, with the assistance of his labourers, drove the cattle towards his pastures; and Esau, springing forward full of life and transport, soon gained the Patriarch's dwelling.

Lo! the herds leave grazing, and with hasty steps, bend their way to yonder sheds; the tame fowl raise their voice in clamorous cries, and the birds flutter to and fro in fearful disorder; a flock of cranes shriek as they fly, and skimming along the surface of the ground, foretel the approach of a storm. The summits of the hills are enveloped in mist, the windows of heaven are opened, and the clouds, scattered into rain mingled with hail, descend in mighty torrents. The high grass is laid flat, the

tender plants are cut down, the floods swell, and the vallies are deluged; but the winds nip the germ of contagion bred by the late heats, the hail kills the canker-worm, and the rains destroy the newly-deposited eggs of the locust.

What is he who crosses the field, unmindful of the furious elements, bareheaded and half clad? O unwise! be counselled by the brute and bird; though they be wrapped in fur and feather, yet will they not brave the tempest. Why expose thy defenceless head, by loitering on thy way, to the gushing torrents, the wounding hail, and raging hurricane? yet hasten thy pace, and linger not thus until the floods overwhelm thee!

Judith and her sister accidentally passing the casement, beheld this man, and supposing him a traveller in doubt where to shelter himself, went to the door, and by signs invited him to come beneath their roof. With tedious and hesitating steps, he at length drew near, and entered. Esau! exclaimed Judith, amazed at his

appearance—and O how well was her amazement justified! His face was of a deadly pale, his looks were fixed, and his upper garment was rent from the shoulder downwards. Stunned, dismayed, confounded, he stood, a bloodless corpse as stolen from the grave, or a carcase-eating spectre from the tombs: he moved not from the threshold, but uttering a deep and hollow groan, fell at his length upon the floor.

Resembling statues of polished marble fashioned by the hand of the idolater, appeared the sisters; the one motionless through astonishment, the other through terror. Thus long they stood, looking down upon the prostrate Esau; when, recovering, the timid Selemia shrank to the end of the chamber, and Judith sat down on a low couch beside her husband. She placed his head upon her lap, and wiped his drowned face, and wrung his hair, from which the rain still streamed.

Sighs and groans having relieved his bosom, Esau gradually lifted up his head,

and resting his elbow on her knee, supported his burning forehead with his hand: perceiving that he still gasped for breath, Judith directed her sister to fill a goblet with wine. This he eagerly attempted to take from her, but the weakness of his arm was as that of a babe, and his hand fell lifeless by his side. Judith held the vessel to his parched lips, but in vain she strove to administer the reviving draught; although his thirst was great, he could not swallow, for choking sighs, and the oppressive swelling of his heart forbade it. He shook his head, then reclined upon her shoulder, and as if subdued by these tokens of affection, now for the first time given, he turned his eyes upon her face, and burst into an agony of tears.

The unsocial mind of Judith, which had ever revolted against the gaiety of Esau, was not proof to his distress; though an alloy to pleasure, she was yet a soother in affliction: tenderness was now awakened in her breast by pity, the

arrogance of her eyes melted into softness, and though unconscious of the cause of his grief, she wept with him the tears of bitterness. When restored to calmness, folding her arm around his neck, she whispered compassionately—Now that thou art more quieted, drink this, and then tell me, my beloved, what heavy ill hath befallen thee. Thou leftest me at noon, and now it is sun-set; in that time explain what hath past, and where hast thou been. Speak, mine own, is it as I feared—say, is thy father dead?

Esau opened his lips; he faltered—spake in broken sentences—My father!—my father!—O he lives!——stopped—strove to proceed, but wholly incapable, again sobbed in extremity of anguish. Judith, unable longer to behold his tears, left the chamber; and having some time given way to her distress, she called one of her servants, and bade him, as the rain had ceased, and the waters were abated, to go to the tabernacles of Isaac, and enquire secretly of the steward, whom

she knew bore much love to Esau, what had taken place; but as the man turned to obey, they perceived Nathanel coming hastily towards them. Judith met him, and motioning silence, conducted him to a distant room, that his voice might not be heard by Esau. When seated, Selemia joined them, and the aged man thus spake.

From his infancy I have loved Esau; for all his thoughts and actions were liberal and generous—ever open and unsuspecting. From a babe even to his now prime of youth, no lay-by, no craftiness ever lurked in his bosom. The ways of the snarer are by him unknown, nor ever has he used the words of fraud to gain a wish; he does not smile to betray, nor would he take advantage of a brother's hunger to obtain the crown of Pharoah. What has passed this day in our dwelling, is no secret; it has already reached the ears of our household and our bondmen, and by to-morrow's dawn, it will be known throughout the city.

Isaac, my master, having passed a sleepless night, finding his soul unusually heavy, and ever apprehensive that the sudden attacks of sickness to which he has of late been subject, will end in death, sent hither, as thou knowest, at break of day for Esau. About the ninth hour my young lord appeared, and much grieved was he to find his father low, weak, and at times greatly agonized; he had taken up his station by the bed of sickness, determined not to quit it, when the Patriarch bade him go forth into the fields, and take venison, and when he had with it made savoury meat such as he loved, to bring it, that he might (as is the holy custom of us Hebrews) eat, and bless him ere he died.—I was standing with other servants, at the outward door, when Esau darted past us, rattling his brazen quiver, and waving his bow above his head; we marked him, and his manly beauty, his athletic shape, and looks of grandeur, now fully expressive of hope that his father would recover, yet of

alacrity to comply with his wishes, were long the subject of our conversation. Soon after, we perceived, deliberately crossing the fields, his brother Jacob, driving a herd of kine; it is said to be a gift from Esau, but I doubt the rumour.

Attend, O Judith!—Jacob having delivered the cattle to his men, entered the dwelling; and on hearing his mother's voice calling in a whisper on his name, sought and found her in her secret chamber. Shortly after, coming into mine own, I heard Jacob say to my mistress——But mark, O wife of Esau! I pass no judgment; I condemn not, neither do I justify. Say not, therefore, to thy neighbours, 'Nathanel said thus and thus.' I but report to thee that which came to my ear, without giving mine own opinion.—'My mother,' said Jacob, 'Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; should my father feel me, I shall seem to him a deceiver, and shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.' To which Rebekah answered, 'Upon me be

thy curse, my son, only obey my voice according to that I command thee.' Jacob at her desire then went in haste, and fetched two kids, of which my mistress having made savoury meat, took raiment of Esau's that she had in the house, and gave them to Jacob, who clothed himself therewith. These things I saw. On his hands, and on the smooth of his neck, she put the flayed skins of the kids; and thus apparelled, delivered him the meat to take to his father.

Entering my lord's chamber, he said, 'Here am I.'—'Who?' demanded Isaac, languidly; 'who art thou?' To which Jacob replied—and his voice trembled as he spake—'I am Esau, thy first-born son; I have done as thou badest—arise therefore, O my father, and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.'

Judith clasped her hands with fervency; and though her lips were closed, her uplifted eyes bespoke the rising frenzy of her mind. My master, continued Nathanel, surprised at this so sudden

fulfilment of his desire, feebly enquired, how was it that he had caught a deer so quickly.—And what was Jacob's reply?—'Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.' On this the Patriarch, half raising himself in the bed, addressed him, saying, 'Come near, that I may feel whether thou art my very son Esau or not;' and having felt him, he added, 'the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' Still unwilling to give a blessing never to be recalled, he again demanded, 'Art thou my very son Esau?' and Jacob again replied, 'I am.'

O ye heavens! exclaimed Judith, did ye hear this? But speak, Nathanel—he blessed him not? The deceived, the too credulous father in time discovered the artifice—he did not bless him? If he did—O Jacob, thou traitor Jacob! as well mayest thou have trodden on a nest of scorpions.—Answer, was he blessed?

He was, replied Nathanel. His princely father hath given to Jacob the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the

earth: salvation is to come to fallen man through him; nations are to bow down to him, and the people are to serve him; he is to prosper in the land, to inherit the possessions of his father, and be lord over his brother and his brother's children.—Be calm, most honored mistress, O be calm! Would that I had held my peace! O stifle thy growing indignation, and be aware, that since this thing is past recal, cursed are those who curse Jacob, and blessed are those who bless him.

On Judith commanding him to proceed, and hide nothing from her, he continued—

Jacob had scarcely left the room, when Esau, delight and joy sparkling in his eyes, returned from the chace, bearing on his shoulders a bleeding doe; this he quickly dismembered, and having prepared the delicate flesh, and strewed over it such fragrant herbs as he knew best suited the taste of Isaac, he brought it to his father. 'Arise,' he cried, full of

tenderness and animation; 'arise, my father, and eat of my venison, which is warm and savoury, and fit to cherish thy heart.'

At these words a mighty dread came over my lord: 'Who art thou?' he fearfully demanded.—'Who am I?' repeated Esau, smoothing his bed, and laying the meat thereon, and adjusting the pillows to raise his head—'Who am I?—Thy son, thy Esau, thy first-born. Believe me, my father, thou hast mended in my absence, and wilt live to see my sons a blooming little band of rebels, and my daughters pretty flowerets flushed with elegance and love. Arise then, and eat of the venison thou badest me take with my bow, that thy soul may bless me and my coming offspring.' The tremblings of Isaac's frame gradually encreased. 'Who?' he said—'where is he that brought me meat? even now he was here; I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed *him*. O Esau! Jacob, thy brother, has beguiled the in-

firmities of my senses, has robbed thee of thy right, and with subtilty, stolen thy blessing! yea, and he shall be blessed.'

I heard the loud and bitter cry of thy husband, and going forward, saw him kneeling by my lord, weeping in agony of soul. 'Hast thou but one blessing? hast thou reserved but one, my father?' cried the heart-broken Esau—'But one! bless me, even me, O my father!'

No more! exclaimed Judith, starting from her seat—no more! Her tears were dashed from her cheek by the impulse of madness; despair sat on her quivering lip, and intents of horror flashed from her eye. Go, Nathanel—I have heard enough; return home, or thy absence will be noticed. Open not thy lips upon what has passed between us; and above all, conceal that thou hast been here. I will see thee again to-morrow.

He obeyed, for her air, severe and absolute, invited not reply. When gone, she traversed the chamber some time,

and then went towards that where she had left her husband. Selemia was following, but Judith, turning back, desired her absence a few moments, and entering, closed the door. Selemia listened to the drawing of the bolt, and sick at heart, repaired to her own apartment.

Had Jacob now beheld Selemia, his affections had been in danger; for though he turned from the *incessant smile*, and *ruby lip*, and *dimpled cheek*, he could not have witnessed with indifference, the pale and pensive look, the starting tear, and impassioned sigh. No longer was Selemia the languid insipid maiden degraded by affectation, occasion having now called forth all the energy and sensibility of her soul. When she reflected that this unhappy strife might produce a total separation between the brethren, and that she should behold Jacob no more, a cold dew burst from every trembling limb; and turning to a graven image placed on an altar at the

upper end of the room, she in pathetic, though ill-judged prayers, strove to deprecate so great an evil.

Snatch him not away, Protector! exclaimed the prostrate maid—deprive not my sight of its only joy, or thou art no longer my worshipped deity; the skill of the carver shall be employed to fashion a model of my love—here on this altar, no longer thine, shall stand the statue of my Jacob, then my only god, his brows crowned with never-fading chaplets, and his melting looks for ever fixed on mine: before him, night and day, shall holy lamps and incense burn; and when my heart breaks, the object of my adoration shall go down with me to the grave.

Sleep hath closed the eyes of the Patriarch's household. Having diligently performed each respective duty, their minds undisturbed by tumultuous pas-

sions, now enjoy serene repose; neither hatred, jealousy, fears, or subject for repentance, haunt their pillow, and fright away heaven's choicest blessing; but in the awful hour of midnight, the hirelings possess in full luxuriance, what is denied their lord, his wife, the sisters, and the mourning brethren.

Although Rebekah began secretly to condemn the act of which she had been guilty, yet by words she sought to justify herself to Isaac.—I repeat to thee, O husband! that Esau is rejected of the Almighty; in taking a wife without our knowledge, from among the heathen, he committed folly, and by selling his birthright when a boy, he forfeited and despised it.—He sinned in that he sold his seniority, answered Isaac, and great was Jacob's sin in purchasing it of his famishing brother. Thus hath God set enmity between the wicked.

Ere the birth of our sons, said Rebekah, thou knowest what were the words of the Lord to me—' Thou shalt

be mother of two nations; the one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.' Thou wert on the point of bestowing the blessing on Esau, when I, by transferring it to the head of Jacob, became the instrument in the hand of God, to fulfil his sacred intentions.

Rebekah, answered Isaac, a righteous purpose cannot justify a crime; I also looked for the completion of this divine sentence, but was it for me to interpose in the designs of Omnipotence? Could not the Lord, who said it, have also brought it to pass in his just and holy way without thy having recourse to means which I fear will call for judgment? Expecting good, thou hast done evil: thy blind partiality for Jacob has robbed my elder-born of his inheritance, and put the words of falsehood into the mouth of my younger. In folly thou hast planted hemlock, and when thy vintage comes, expect to drink of the baleful fruit of thy hand.—O my Esau! how didst thou rise

the full and flourishing ear of wheat, until the mother-earth shrinking from thee, hath left thy roots bare and unprotected!

A soft and gentle voice was heard without. Rebekah listened, and hearing it repeat her name, approached the door; again she was intreated to come forth, when looking through the gloom, she distinguished Selemia standing beyond the fence which separated the garden from the plain. Rebekah, marvelling greatly that the timid maiden should leave the tents of Esau in the depth of night, and traverse the damp fields alone, exposing her tenderness to the chill air, and unwholesome exhalations, went out with intent to bring her into the dwelling.

Long had the Patriarch lain in doubt and suspense, when he heard footsteps slowly crossing his chamber: a sigh replied to his question of 'Who is there?' and the next moment he felt his hand seized and moistened with scalding tears.

Jacob! said the Patriarch, trembling, O Jacob! what hast thou done? Thou hast broken thy brother's heart. Esau would not have thus acted by thee. Twins in birth, ye were until now, twins in affection; the same bosom nourished ye, on the same bed your tender bodies sported and reposed, and like birds of one brood, ye both together fed: when thou didst weep, Esau wept and comforted thee; when Esau smiled, thou didst with kisses smile on him. We marked your affections, your pastimes, and infant sorrows, and often have said to our friends, 'If ye would witness brotherly love in its utmost purity, observe the words, the looks, and actions of Esau and of Jacob.'

He was here interrupted by the convulsive sobs of the youth, who, falling beside his father devoid of strength, hid his face on Isaac's bed.

Mournful is the sight of grief in all seasons of life, but when it appears in old age, thrice is it pitiable!—On Re-

bekah's return, the anguish and horror of her soul was deeply impressed upon her venerable countenance. She had hearkened in silent dismay, to the recital just made to her by Selemia, and saw the maiden quit her to steal back to Esau's abode, without having recovered the power of speech: but the appearance of her favourite son, overwhelmed with grief, now awakened her recollection, and she related the motive of Selemia's visit.

Fearing from the ferocity of her sister's looks on entering Esau's room, that she devised harm to the young supplanter, Selemia, recovered from her first emotions, stole from her chamber, and overheard an intention, which, although it gave terror to her mind, yet, by inspiring her with the wish of saving Jacob, even at the expense of losing him for ever, armed her heart with courage, and her feet with speed. Gliding away unperceived, she fled like the affrighted lapwing, over the plain to Isaac's dwelling; and thus by communicating to his

mother the danger of her best-loved son, preserved him from the untimely fate of Abel.

Rebekah, having acquainted the Patriarch with Jacob's peril, added, Said I not ever that the soul of Judith was evil? But, she continued, with an anger which now triumphed over her sorrow, Esau's designed victim shall escape! Arise, Jacob—cast off thy grief, my child; thou hast the blessing, and must be careful of thy life to enjoy it, and fulfil the intentions of the Almighty in thy favour. Flee thou to Laban, my brother, in Haran, and there tarry with him until the wrath of Esau turn away, and he happily forget that which thou hast done.

O not so, my mother, exclaimed the afflicted Jacob, not so—I cannot leave thee. Can I forsake my father in the hour of his descending to the grave? can I quit thee, my mother? No; let my brother slay me—rather would I fall

by his hand, than be thus driven from ye and the country which gave me birth.

Isaac, at Rebekah's entreaties, joined with her in commanding Jacob to depart, and thereby preserve his life; to which the fond mother added, Beloved son, when thy brother's anger is passed, I will send and fetch thee from thence: a few months will soon flee away, and then thou wilt be restored in safety to our arms; but shouldst thou stay here, thy life hangs each moment in doubt; for though Selemia says that Esau, through affection for his father, will not raise his hand against thee whilst he lives, but will wait until the days of mourning be past, yet we know not how soon this purpose of delaying vengeance may change; stirred up by Judith, he may even now seek thee in thy bed. Go then, my child, and in saving thyself, preserve me.

Go, said the Patriarch, nor add to the wrongs thou hast already done thy brother, by bringing thy blood upon his

head; but ere thou goest, draw near—cast thyself on thy knees, and give thy hands into mine. Thus spake he sternly, but when he felt the tremulous touch of the poor youth, and felt his tears, he was softened, and continued, in a low and broken voice—

The blessing of God be on thee, my child, and on thy children, that thou mayest be a multitude of people, and mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto my father Abraham. Go to Padan-aran, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father, and take thee a wife from among the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother: bring with thee what servants, beasts, provisions, and gifts shall please thee, but in thy way thither beware of the Hittites and the Canaanites; enter not their habitations, for thou knowest what enmity is between us. Moderate thy distress, and give not way to inconsolable sorrow: the speech of the aged is most sacred; let then mine give comfort

to thy wounded spirit. Thou dost repent the evil done; therefore I say unto thee, thy sin shall meet with pardon, and thou be restored to my arms. Go now, my love; and may the mercy of the Protector of all, guard thee from future ills, as it has now snatched thee from death.

Jacob laid his streaming face upon that of his father—he pressed his aged hands with kisses, and sobbed upon them; then rose, and threw himself upon the bosom of his mother. A long and sacred silence followed; at length he tore himself from her embrace, and left the room.

The Patriarch and his wife, alike exhausted by the violent emotions they had suffered, could only sigh; but the serenity of innocence, joined to the divine assurances he had of again beholding Jacob, soon spread their balmy influence over the mind of Isaac. Not so, Rebekah—she felt the shame of conscious guilt, yet still backward to confess her fault, she

murmured against the cruelty of Esau, that compelled this dreadful separation; at which the anger of her husband was again kindled, and he replied, with severity, I do not justify him who seeks to spill the blood of his brother; but it is thou, O woman! that hast armed the hand of Esau against the life of Jacob.

Woman! repeated Rebekah—woman! O Isaac, never yet didst thou call me thus. Lo! I have done that I thought most righteous. At his birth God gave the inheritance to our younger, and I have secured it to him—what is my crime? I expected thy good-will, thy smile, thy approbation, and is this my recompense? Appeased by the anguish of her voice, he replied, And why not, my Rebekah, why not have consulted me? why perform this thing without my knowledge? Never yet, as I think, hast thou concealed aught from me; this is late indeed, beloved wife, to use deception with thy fond husband.

Rebekah was speechless; she remem-

bered the parting words of her mother, and groaned in spirit; I would not willingly wound thy soul, continued Isaac, but judge thyself, my Rebekah, look upon the consequences of thy work: thou hast lost to thyself the affections of thy elder; created an enemy to thy child, who had never one before: sown hatred between the brethren, and driven thy younger son for ever from thy sight.

His words shot like a ball of ice through the heart of Rebekah, and she faintly exclaimed—*For ever!* for ever, didst thou say?—O Isaac, shall I no more behold my son? is it thus I am to be punished—will he not again return? Speak, thou art silent! O my husband—my lord, O holy Isaac! well I know thy words are prophetic—I have lost my Jacob! But he is not yet gone—he shall not go—I will seek, I will detain him, and if the furious Esau persist in wrath, let him slay him in my arms.

Taking a lamp from the table, she passed, through her own, into the cham-

ber of Jacob: on hearing footsteps, imagining she had still the power to keep with her the darling of her age, her heart beat with returning joy. My son! she cried, and placing the lamp upon the hearth, advanced hastily, and caught the hand of him who stood at the head of the bed. Death would have been more welcome to her sight than the presence of him she now saw. From the hand she had seized, fell a naked sword, and from the other, was flung the covering of the bed which had seemingly been torn from it, in rude disorder.

Thy son! replied he, in slow and solemn accents, Am *I* thy son? Faint with terror, and overcome with dismay, she sank upon the couch. Long he looked upon her in silence, and she suffered more from his calmness, than had he broke into vehemence and reproaches.

Rebekah! said Esau, and the word wrung her heart with sudden anguish—Yes, I knew not that thou wished me still to call thee mother: how had I of-

fended thee, and how lost thy love: wilt thou not speak to me? Then placing himself beside her, although I was ever heedless, didst therefore imagine me proof to affliction? though improvident and light of mind, didst think I would suffer myself to be duped, defrauded, robbed? I loved my brother, and thou knewest it—should he have sought my ruin, and deprived me of that I prized above the possession of Canaan—my father's blessing? a blessing which once given, can never be called back. When I become a father, I shall have no blessing to transmit to my children: that given by Terah unto Abraham, and by Abraham unto Isaac, was mine, as being elder born, but is mine no longer. Thou, my mother, hast been led astray by thy affection for thy younger, and I forgive thee, but yet thou shouldst have remembered that I also was thy son. Say, where—but no, thou wilt not tell me where thou hast concealed him.

Rebekah, encouraged by his returning

softness, ventured to acquaint him that Jacob had departed, but fearful that Esau might pursue him, she prudently concealed whither he was gone, and at what time he left her.

The fury of the wounded horse ranging over the field of battle, spurning with bloody hoof the dying and the dead; the roar of huge rhinoceros, when pursuing his enemy behemoth, he sees him take shelter from destruction, among a herd of his own species, whose numbers he dare not attack, are not more terrible than were those of Esau, on hearing of the flight of Jacob.

Gone! he cried, rushing from the bed; gone! escaped! still wily, false, timid, and treacherous! Since my intended victim hath eluded instant vengeance, I will wreak it on our mutual gifts—the grove he last night planted, shall be torn from the ground, a prey to the flames—and when the green boughs trail in the dust, I will fancy them the snakish curls of his head—and

when the trees blaze in the fire—my fountain shall overflow with the blood of the kine!—Beersheba shall echo with their cries, and be scattered with their mangled carcasses—then, when every token of our attachment is rent to nothing, I will strive to forget I ever had a brother.

Alarmed by the sound of his voice, Isaac, by the assistance of his servants, had risen from his bed; and now, the agitation of his mind overcoming the weakness of his body, having dismissed the men, he entered the room alone. Esau, he said, wilt thou, my kind Esau, lend me thy arm for support? I cannot stand, and my sight is so uncertain, that I know not where to tread. Esau, who was departing at the opposite door when Isaac appeared, turned back, and led him to the couch, where sat Rebekah, whose misery had now reached its height. The Patriarch retaining the hand of his son, took that of his wife, and attempted to bring them together, but the young man

withdrawing his in stubborn sorrow, exclaimed—Not so, my father—I am hateful in the sight of my mother, therefore will remove for ever from it.

Hear me, my Esau, cried the venerable Seer, stay and hear me, whilst I repeat in the presence of my wife, that which shall come upon thee. Thy dwelling shall also be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; by thy sword thou shalt live, and it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break thy brother's yoke from off thy neck.

Hast thou not made him my lord and ruler? interrupted Esau, and given me to him for a servant? Am I not an alien, a cast off one? O Jacob, thy crime will not go unpunished—thy treachery will meet with treachery—thy youth will be spent in servitude: drought will consume thee in the day, and frost by night; sleep will depart thine eyes, and thy head bow beneath excess of labour—and am I the author of his sufferings?

No, replied Isaac, thou art not; but added he, with the awful solemnity of a sovereign judge, thou art the author of thine own. Stand thou there, Esau, and depart not, until thou hast heard me. Say, who was it that for a mess of pottage, sold his birthright, and by giving up his patrimony, betrayed his children for many generations? Who was it that for a moment's present indulgence, relinquished his future happiness, and for the sordid gratification of appetite, took heaven to witness, that he renounced my blessing?—Now learn, that this blessing and my worldly possessions could not be divided, and that by selling the former, thou didst lose thy claim to the latter; and lastly, who was it that despised the voice of his parents, unknown to them wedded idolatry, turned away from the living God, neglected his worship, and to please an unbelieving wife, bowed the knee before a carved image?

Go now to thy household god of hewn stone, and pour into his compas-

sionate ear thy bitter plaints; go and adore thy molten deity of burnished gold, and with prayers and incense thou mayest persuade him to avenge thy wrongs: but if these are deaf to so true a worshipper, then turn thee to thy favoured sculptured idol—he assuredly will take pity on thy tears, and speak comfort to thy soul.

The Patriarch percieving that admonition in an ironical garb, only served to harden the heart of Esau, suddenly checked himself; and with dignity continued:

When thy mother and I advised thee to consult with us on thy choice of a wife, thou wardedst off our entreaties with the wanton laugh of folly, scoffing at the most sacred and important act of our lives, with saying (doubly irreverent, for it was in the presence of thy mother) that women were but toys, fickle triflers, the pastimes of a moment, the insignificant objects of dalliance. Now learn, that though man rules the world, woman rules the destinies of man: from the

creation even to this hour, female influence decides our fate; for woman holds the end of that invisible but adamantine chain, riveted in our hearts, by which, as her own inclination points, she raises us to heaven, or drags us to perdition. Hadst thou wedded Virtue, thou hadst been virtuous, but having made an helpmate of Impiety, art become impious. Armed by a *toy*, an *insignificant trifler*, but in truth a potent daughter of blood, thou standest here before thy parents an intentional murderer, a midnight chamber assassin! Wherefore, thy fruitful wife shall bring forth death, and thou, Esau, long be childless.

The reproof and sentence fell on Esau like the bolt of heaven, and he answered—I have sinned, and most grievously—my punishment is just, and in these things I now acknowledge the hand of an offended God. But is Jacob justified thereby? No, never shall he meet with forgiveness from me; yet, fear not, I will not pursue him—neither hope, for

hither he shall not return. Well is he named Jacob, for twice has he supplanted me. It is true I sold my birthright, yea, sealed the bargain with an oath, yet I ever thought he did it but to tempt my folly, and have often said, when taunted with the name of Edom, 'Never will Jacob take advantage of my childish imprudence.' I never wronged him, for ere his tongue could ask, I gave, and in his looks, I read the wishes of his soul. O not so, added he, mournfully, and the tear of sorrow stole down his cheek—O not so, for had his soul shone forth in his looks, then had I learned to beware his subtilty.

He was leaving the room, when Rebekah, catching his garment, exclaimed, My son! my Esau! He turned, and looked upon her, and great was the struggle within him, whether to yield to tenderness, or be firm in resentment. If ever thou lovedst me, said Rebekah—if thou wert nourished at my breast—if ever I was dear to thee—I have done

thee wrong—but if thou canst yet love me—O Esau! O my child! The voice of maternal anguish was heard, and nature triumphed. Extending his arms, he fell upon the neck of his mother, mingling his tears with hers, and with those of the Patriarch. But my dearest mother, my beloved father, he said, in pity to the wounded heart of your son, never again mention in his hearing, the hated name of Jacob.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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